Commentary

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Furtive Smokers—and What They Tell Us About America

Peter L. Berger

It's Big Government, Stupid
David Frum

Land for No Peace
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Home Truths
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No White Males Need Apply
Midge Decter

An Exchange on "Schindler's List"
Philip Gourevitch & Critics

Books in Review: Linda Chavez/Edward Alexander/ Jeffrey Bloom/Evelyn Toynton/Jeffrey Salmon

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Letters from Readers

"Schindler's List"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Having resided in Cracow in the immediate aftermath of the events depicted in *Schindler's List* (I was there during the trial of the sadistic Nazi murderer, Amon Goeth), I was greatly disappointed with Philip Gourevitch's article, "A Dissent on *Schindler's List*" [February]. That a contributing editor of the *Forward* (God help us!) cannot distinguish between Yiddish and Polish is difficult to believe: Oskar Schindler's Jewish "investors" speak Polish, not Yiddish. It is equally hard to fathom that a Jewish reviewer writing in a leading Jewish journal is unaware that, upon moving, traditional Jews remove *mezuzot* from their doorposts when there is reason to believe that the next tenants would not be Jews. That is why, in the film, Cracow Jews leaving for the ghetto "are trying to pry the silver *mezuzah* from the door," and not, as Mr. Gourevitch suggests, "because they have been stopped from grabbing [!] other valuables."

Finally, and most offensively, Mr. Gourevitch writes: "And here are Jews as the SS invade their apartments. Are they consoling their children? No, they are making them eat jewels wadded in balls of bread."

By the time the Cracow Jews began to be moved to the ghetto by the SS, their surviving children were beyond tears and beyond consolation. They were, in fact, no longer children. As for the diamonds wadded in balls of bread, they offered a slim chance of survival. Indeed, later in the film, Schindler uses these diamonds—perhaps the very same diamonds—to "buy" from a Nazi commander a trainload of Jewish women who would otherwise have been gassed in Auschwitz.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When I finished reading Philip Gourevitch's "dissent" on *Schindler's List*, it remained unclear to me what Mr. Gourevitch has against this "mega-production," as he calls it. He himself concedes that it is the "most affirmative" film ever made about the Holocaust—by which, I take it, he means that Steven Spielberg has made a movie affirming the possibility of humanitarian effort even in a genocidal context and a movie, moreover, that can be shown to popular audiences, and need not be reserved exclusively for aficionados of "art films."

I found the movie a powerful depiction of its excruciating subject. It amazed me at the time that I was inspired to endure these three painful hours and feel gratitude to Spielberg for the experience. My amazement and gratitude have not diminished.

It was inspiring to be shown how an initially unprincipled opportunist entrepreneur . . . was stirred, perhaps by his innate individualism, to do what he could to undermine the soulless bureaucratic machine which dominated his environment. It was not that Schindler appeared to be an *ohev yisrael*, a friend of the Jews, but that something in him, something ultimately mysterious but intensely humane, compelled him to discover a solidarity with "his" Jews, the *Schindlerjuden*.

I lost so many relatives in the Holocaust; maybe that is why I found the film so appealing and, finally, so uplifting. Is it a perfect film? What would a perfect film be about the Holocaust? For me it is enough that it is an extraordinarily—even though painfully—absorbing film which *demonstrates* the splendor of human sympathies and humanitarian passion.

The film has also left me feeling richer for my Jewishness, more appreciative of what that heritage stood for and stands for in the face of totalitarian evil. Again, a perfect film? What would that be? A moral film? In a profound sense, yes—hence, a film which has a claim to greatness, *pace* Philip Gourevitch!

[RABBI] URI D. HERSCHER
Executive Vice President
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It seems to me that there are two serious problems with Philip Gourevitch's article.

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1. The movie is not about the Holocaust *per se*; it is about Oskar Schindler. Perhaps Mr. Gourevitch would have preferred a movie about the Holocaust, a movie that would, indeed must, be infused with the spirit of bottomless evil. Hollywood would not make such a movie and that is perhaps justification for criticism of Hollywood, but not of a movie that never claimed to do what Mr. Gourevitch wishes it had done.

2. Mr. Gourevitch complains that we are given no reason why Schindler was a good person in a world of bad people. Let us ignore the overwhelming probability that critics would have seen such an analysis of Schindler's development and motivation as "facile pop psychology." There is an even better reason for the film's avoiding such an analysis: neither the evidence of experiential anecdote nor the attempts of rigorous research to determine how roots of goodness could have survived in the soil of evil have discovered anything at all. About the best anyone has come up with has been a "finding" that the Schindlers "see people who are different from themselves as still being human." Such a "finding" might be meaningful if identification of this virtue had been made *before* the Holocaust (so that the behavior of the Schindlers could have been *predicted*). But this was not the case. "Seeing people who are different from themselves as still being human" gives us no explanation of development and motivation, but merely restates the question: *why* were the Schindlers capable of "seeing people who are different from themselves as still being human"?

We do not know why the Schindlers were capable of this, and this is why *Schindler's List* refused, quite properly, to try to tell us.

STEVEN GOLDBERG
City College-CUNY
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was privileged to view *Schindler's List* at a preview intended for survivors whose lives had been saved by Oskar Schindler. We were graced by the presence of Mrs. Schindler and honored by the many who were there by the grace of her husband's action.

Despite being fascinated by the replaying of events, long hidden behind an opaque curtain of pseudo-normalcy, I tried to focus on the faces of my Cracovian brethren and gauge their reaction as they searched for the facsimiles of themselves, played by unfamiliar actors. Occasional shrieks of recognition of places and events, mostly expressed by a deep "Oh my God," and the sporadic appearance of handkerchiefs to wipe the streaming tears punctuated the viewing and then, a long eerie silence at the end of the film. The picture was over and no one was moving. Stunned, we stared at the credits rolling down the screen. Until someone's loud exclamation, "incredible," broke the spell.

No matter what the critics say, no matter what the public's reactions, for us, the survivors, there is only one response, a response usually reserved for another survivor when he concludes giving public testimony. That is appreciatively and warmly to embrace Steven Spielberg in the silent act of bonding. . . .

NORBERT FRIEDMAN
West Hempstead, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Philip Gourevitch has a big advantage over me: he has read Thomas Keneally's novel, on which the Spielberg movie is based, as well as the reviews of the film, and made a general study of it, which I have not.

My (dubious) advantage over Mr. Gourevitch is that I myself am a Holocaust survivor and a five-year inhabitant of the Lodz ghetto.

In my opinion, although Mr. Gourevitch makes some valid points (Oskar Schindler, for example, should have been depicted more accurately), his critique is mostly nitpicking, written by a brainy technician with little heart or feeling.

The movie is a great historical contribution. It vividly depicts one aspect of Jewish life in Poland under the Nazis, the horrible terror. Perhaps the other aspects—the enormous, dehumanizing hunger and the unimaginably cruel, bone-chilling cold—did not apply as much to Schindler's chosen group, but they certainly did apply to the general ghetto population. It would have been of great value had Spielberg shown at least a few of the emaciated faces, like death masks. Still, he deserves the gratitude of the whole civilized world. He certainly has mine.

WILLIAM SHATTAN
Brooklyn, New York

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To the Editor of Commentary:

For years, like many other Holocaust survivors, I have been writing and lecturing thousands of high-school and college students on the Holocaust and drawing on its lessons to point out the evil of racism and prejudice—to the detriment of my vocal chords and emotional life. In recognition of my efforts, the New York State Regents have honored me with the prestigious Louis E. Yavner Award.

Now Steven Spielberg has achieved what we, the survivors, have always wanted. By his use of a mass medium to unprecedented effect, millions of uninformed viewers whom we could have never reached will, hopefully, learn about the most horrible crime in history.

But here comes Philip Gourevitch and takes up four pages of Commentary to nitpick and find some faults in Spielberg's universally praised film. Mr. Gourevitch begins by suggesting that warning labels of "nudity," "violence," or the "titillating euphemism" of "adult situations" be applied to the movie because of its scenes of naked Jews being herded to their deaths in gas chambers. By now Mr. Gourevitch must have learned that stripping the victims of their clothes and hair was part of the Nazi attempt to dehumanize them. Had Spielberg shown them fully dressed in those instances, Mr. Gourevitch would probably have accused him of inaccuracies.

Likewise, Mr. Gourevitch's report that Spielberg's team sought 800 people who looked "'stereotypically Semitic,' . . . with thick lips, big noses, dark curly hair" for casting in the film, ends with the unfounded assertion that "Spielberg's Jewish caricatures . . . seem lifted . . . from the pages of *Der Stuermer*." Had Spielberg enlisted a crowd of typical blond and blue-eyed Cracow residents, Mr. Gourevitch would have complained of miscasting the *Schindlerjuden*.

The reviewer speculates at length about Oskar Schindler's motives, the "unfathomable mystery" of his decency, and is irked that "Spielberg offers no clues" and no "coherent motive" to explain why Schindler acted as he did to save his Jews, unlike in the Keneally book, where Schindler is depicted as "motivated by disgust, which is to say a sense of common humanity."

Of course, in a film without a narrator, the viewer does not have to be told—the hero's feelings are evident from the actor's facial expressions and behavior. But Mr. Gourevitch was so busy counting the pistol shots ("By my count, Jewish heads explode in *Schindler's List* at an average rate of one every twelve minutes") that he did not see the inner emotions shown by Liam Neeson (Schindler) when he witnessed the liquidation of the ghetto and the brutality of the SS. And it was when Schindler realized that the Nazis had changed from ghettoizing Jews and using them as laborers to a policy of extermination that he became passionately involved in saving Jewish lives.

Mr. Gourevitch somehow gets lost in his own confusion: first he states that "From start to *finish*, . . . Spielberg's Schindler is simply another Nazi who regards the killing of Jewish slaves as a senseless *business practice*" (emphasis added). But a few paragraphs later, he contradicts himself by saying, "Schindler's passion for saving Jews and for sabotaging efforts to exterminate them completely outweighs his passion for money." Elsewhere, he reminds us that Schindler "used all his considerable financial and human resources to save from extermination the more than 1,100 Jews he employed as slave laborers. . . . By the war's end, he is close to bankrupt."

Actually, Schindler did not employ his Jews as slave laborers, although by the prevailing rules their wages had to be paid to the SS. But the *Schindlerjuden* were well-treated, well-fed, and protected. No wonder that many Jews vied for jobs at his factory.

On the positive side, we hear that *Schindler's List* is enjoying great success in Germany, where a new generation of Germans will be exposed to vivid images of the Holocaust. In this connection, I wonder if the film's title has been kept; if so, German viewers will read it as "Schindler's Cunning" (a translation of the German word *list*), a fairly appropriate description of Schindler's actions, both as a profiteering industrialist and as a rescuer of Jews from the hell of Auschwitz. . . .

Alfred Lipson
Holocaust Resource Center
and Archives
Queensborough Community
College-CUNY
Bayside, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

Although in general I respect Philip Gourevitch's assessment of *Schindler's List*, I would have preferred that he had not made such a . . . prejudicial reference to Jews looking as if they had been "lifted from the pages of *Der Stuermer*"—especially since, in at least one instance (the scene involving the *mezuzah*), Mr. Gourevitch plainly misinterprets a depiction of evident religious devotion as one of pecuniary greed. . . .

Seth A. Halpern
Scarsdale, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Before I went to see *Schindler's List*, I was skeptical and acutely worried that the film's predominantly Christian audience would be viewing a gratuitous Hollywood version of the Holocaust, showing some good Nazis and some evil Jews—all, hunted and hunter alike, depicted as universal victims. I was also painfully aware that among those who watched it with me, too few would ever read Lucy S. Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* or watch Marcel Ophuls's documentary film, *The Sorrow and the Pity*. But what I saw was a masterful and accurate movie which avoids clichés. The Jews in the film are not a "cowering mob or . . . a shrieking, scampering mob," as Philip Gourevitch describes them. They are defenseless, terrified, and wretched. Nor is the Jewish investor in the car with Schindler "scrunched, simian-looking, grunting in Yiddish," as Mr. Gourevitch maintains. He is, rather, an elderly, pathetic man who is asked to give money to a Nazi (Schindler) and who knows he has no choice. . . .

What is truly enraging is Mr. Gourevitch's contention that the Jews in the movie look like cartoons from *Der Stuermer*, and his assertion that because of their "thick lips, big noses, dark curly hair and even darker eyes . . . [they] hardly need yellow stars to be identified." The movie shows Jews—ugly, plain, beautiful. That is how we look. Go to Crown Heights, the jewelry district in New York City, concerts, theaters, and markets. That is what we look like. Add period clothes and that is how we looked. Would Mr. Gourevitch have preferred glamor?

The movie is not perfect, nor can it legitimately be called a "document," but the film and

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Steven Spielberg deserve more credit than they get in Mr. Gourevitch's niggardly and insulting review.

RUTH KING
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Philip Gourevitch's chief objection to *Schindler's List* is that Steven Spielberg "introduc[es] the suggestion of moral ambiguity into the Holocaust." This derives, it seems, from the "enigmatic" character of Schindler's decency in the film, as compared with the Keneally book: the fact that he is never shown to renounce his Nazism.

I am mystified that *anyone* could view this film and not see in the progression of Schindler's actions a renunciation, if not repudiation, of Nazism. The film reports historical events: Oskar Schindler was a Nazi-party member who, despite his corrupt origins, took great personal risks to save over a thousand lives. Where is the moral ambiguity in this portrayal?

In his eagerness to find fault, Mr. Gourevitch raises several other points that do not withstand scrutiny.

As evidence that "Schindler is simply another Nazi who regards the killing of Jewish slaves as a senseless business practice," he cites Schindler's protest to the SS that he expects compensation when a worker is shot. It is hard to see what other reaction was possible in that context, even if Schindler were genuinely pained at the senseless killing and wanted to prevent its recurrence ("You know, killing Jews is not ethical" surely would not have sufficed). . . .

Mr. Gourevitch (along with some other reviewers) objects that few Jews are "individuated from the mob of victims." This, of course, was Spielberg's intent. This film is not about the plight of a *person* or a *family*. It is about the *Shoah*, an event whose enormity is not grasped by most Americans, a project which came all too close to "succeeding" *precisely* because the Nazis stripped the Jews of their individual identities as humans. If this point alone is understood by its viewers, *Schindler's List* will have accomplished something.

JONATHAN BALSAM
Lawrence, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In rereading Philip Gourevitch's article, I was struck by a certain cattiness that seems to infuse his remarks, as if it were somehow obscene that Steven Spielberg should be so universally lauded for this movie. For some people, I suppose, there is a certain "enshrinement" of the Holocaust so that it can never be adequately portrayed by people who did not experience it first-hand.

Mr. Gourevitch stretches hard to make his points, most of which appear to me to be rather picayune. . . . As far as Jewish jewels are concerned, Mr. Gourevitch either does not know or conveniently ignores the age-old custom, dating back to medieval persecution, when Jews fleeing to other lands sewed diamonds and other jewels into their robes. It was their only means of future economic survival. In the Cracow ghetto there was not always time for this delicate arrangement, so having children swallow jewels was a normal, albeit frantic, variation.

Mr. Gourevitch misses the entire point of Spielberg's presentation. Most people tend to think of the Holocaust in terms of the murder of six million. But looking beneath this stupefying tragedy, one is forced to contemplate the real horror of the Nazi era: the wretched philosophy of National Socialism which dehumanized Jews—which viewed them as a subhuman species that had infected the world too long. It was this warped and horrifying doctrine that Hitler appropriated as justification for the SS and their willing cohorts in the East to exterminate Jews as one would spray mosquitoes or step on roaches, while all but a few of their countrymen watched passively or secretly applauded. Hence Spielberg accurately depicts Amon Goeth picking off Jewish prisoners from his balcony with no more compunction than if he were shooting an odd sparrow. . . .

This dehumanizing aspect of the Holocaust, I feel, is what Steven Spielberg, more than anyone else up to this point, has succeeded in showing. It was precisely why he chose to eschew developing individual characters. The impact would have been lessened, and he wanted it squarely in our faces for two-and-a-half hours—and, it is hoped, for all time and for all future generations.

SAM TISCHLER
Palm Harbor, Florida

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To the Editor of Commentary:

Philip Gourevitch's petulance is so pervasive that it blinds him to certain realities and concepts, concerning which he should know better. A few examples. . . : Mr. Gourevitch scoffs at the randomness of Steven Spielberg's "exploding heads," occurring by his calculation "once every twelve minutes." But randomness amid the organized horror is precisely the point being made. . . . If Spielberg cuts to scenes of Nazis dallying with Aryan women, he is simply demonstrating the juxtaposition of hell and hedonism; so near each other geographically, yet so removed. . . .

Mr. Gourevitch is very unhappy with the Jewish businessman who exclaims, "money is still money," at the time Schindler is seeking investors for his factory. But during this period, when the "Final Solution" was not yet apparent, Jews, though desperate and terrified, strove for normalcy in their lives. While unfortunately not pictured either in the book or the movie, the range of Jewish cultural, religious, educational, health-related, and philanthropic activities was enormous. As Emmanuel Ringelblum documents in his *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, wealthy Jews contributed astounding sums of money for the relief of fellow Jews. The ghettos spawned an extensive *responsa* literature as observant Jews, trying to cling to some semblance of life as they understood it, sought *halakhic* answers to unprecedented situations. That a businessman was thinking about money at that time is comprehensible and realistic.

Straying from criticism of the film, Mr. Gourevitch feels obliged to bash some of the more laudatory reviews, and Spielberg himself. Why is Mr. Gourevitch so upset that Spielberg seems to have rediscovered his Jewish identity? In interviews in which the issue surfaces, Spielberg comes across as remarkably sincere. If, as Mr. Gourevitch claims, Spielberg equated himself with an actual Holocaust survivor, that is unfortunate; but if in exhorting his cast he stated, "We are not making a film, we are making a document," that is unexceptionable. The film is not a documentary witness, but it can nonetheless become an important secondary document.

Surprisingly, Mr. Gourevitch totally ignores one area in which the film is deficient, particularly as the subject was covered in the book. . . . Keneally describes a number of instances of sabotage by Cracow's Jewish youths who dressed as SS officers and bombed restaurants and railroad stations. This was an important omission from the movie, as it would have taken a little edge off the portrait of unremitting Jewish helplessness, and yet Mr. Gourevitch, concerned about the Jews being seen as a "silent, cowering mob," leaves it unremarked. . . .

I believe that in making *Schindler's List* Spielberg had two goals—one fairly circumscribed, and the other more global. He set out to make the best film he could, not of the *Einsatzgruppen*, or the Warsaw-ghetto uprising, or the Kovno ghetto, but of the Oskar Schindler story. He knew that if he succeeded, his audiences would become more receptive to learning about the other horrors, tragedies, and terrors of the Holocaust, including the civilization that was destroyed virtually overnight. I think Spielberg has succeeded brilliantly.

Mr. Gourevitch is amused that President Clinton has "implored" the American public to see the film. The President was right on target.

Allen Bodner
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

That Philip Gourevitch is made uncomfortable by the nearly universal praise that has thus far greeted *Schindler's List* is not surprising; for too many critics, nothing succeeds like failure, and nothing fails like success. Films like *Schindler's List* raise the ante to such heights that poor Steven Spielberg never had a chance. For where snatching the moral high ground is concerned, the artist simply cannot win, and critics like Mr. Gourevitch always do. Indeed, Spielberg and others—be they filmmakers or fictionists—are admonished to keep their distance from material that "artistic representation" should not—yes, *cannot*—touch. Unfortunately, such arguments end by advocating silence, and I have yet to find the measuring rod that can distinguish between the "silence" that allowed the Holocaust itself to happen and the presumably richer, better silence that stands before the Unspeakable in respectful awe. Given the choice, I will take *Schindler's List* every time—even with the warts Mr. Gourevitch rightly points out.

Sanford Pinsker
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

To the Editor of Commentary:

Philip Gourevitch's article is a real trip. Perhaps it is best understood if read while stoned; otherwise, one's heart might break to see an object of art so callously treated. . . .

The comedian Jackie Mason has told us that Jewish audiences were embarrassed because in his act he appeared "too Jewish." One gets the impression that Mr. Gourevitch was similarly embarrassed by the film. He asks why Steven Spielberg had to hire such Semitic-looking actors to play Jews. Perhaps French peasant villagers would have been more appropriate. . . .

In the movie, Schindler witnesses the destruction of the Cracow ghetto. For Mr. Gourevitch, Schindler's emotional reaction to this episode is caused only by regret that he will lose his source of cheap labor. But many people see the destruction of the ghetto as a turning point for Schindler; his humanity will no longer permit him to condone the behavior of his nation toward the Jews. He becomes a light in the darkness. How could Mr. Gourevitch have missed this? . . . .

In *Schindler's List*, Steven Spielberg has told the story of the Holocaust in a way that has not been matched. . . . It is not clear whether Mr. Gourevitch understands the magnitude of the Holocaust, but we hope his dissent will not diminish the magnificence of the film.

James B. Heft
Ruth Weinshall
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . If you believe there is at least a possibility that people may do good, even when it requires them to rise above themselves, you will not need to have explained to you why Schindler saved the *Schindlerjuden*. In the movie, Steven Spielberg does not, as Mr. Gourevitch claims, advance the "false and foolish notion that goodness is incomprehensible." He assumes that it is comprehensible, on sight.

It is the barbarity of the Nazi Amon Goeth that comes closer than Oskar Schindler's decency to

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being an "unfathomable mystery." . . . Yet, unhappy as we must be that it is so, Goeth's evil can be fathomed. How hard do we believe it would be, here and now, to find people who, given Goeth's absolute power, would be as absolutely corrupted? Who would, specifically, as freely blow out the brains of Jews—or of homosexuals, blacks; whomever they despised? . . .

Of Schindler's acts in "constantly enlarging the roster of his Jewish employees, often taking in people who seem less than able-bodied laborers," Mr. Gourevitch says, "we never know why." We do know; these acts speak for themselves. Despite the Nazi-party button in Schindler's lapel, we have seen him show no sign of enthusiasm for Nazism. On the contrary, in the opening nightclub scene we have watched him happily hoodwink real Nazis. . . . His party button stands for expediency, not for conviction. It would be harder, more tortuous, more lacking in probable cause to think of a bad motive for Schindler's acts than to accept as genuine the good motive which comes naturally to mind. And, after all, we take the movie as a whole. At the end, our good estimate stands confirmed. . . .

Mr. Gourevitch tells us of a casting call last year in Cracow, where Spielberg's team sought stereotypically Semitic-looking people and says that "he certainly found them." . . . What's wrong with that? . . . Watching the movie's Jews, I thought, over and over, they are real; I recognize them. . . .

It did not occur to me that a character pried the silver *mezuzah* from the door only because he was "stopped from grabbing other valuables." He took it because of what it was, not what is was made of. Moreover, the glimpses of Jewish homes, from which we see the occupants being ejected, tell us more about the culture of these Jews than Mr. Gourevitch concedes. . . .

"Perhaps the strangest thing about Spielberg's Jews is their accents," Mr. Gourevitch says, and adds, "This may have been a deliberate directorial decision. . . ." So far, so good. But the accents do not make the "'inhuman' Jews sound as alien as possible." They make them sound like the East European Jews we ourselves have known. The movie uses a mix of devices to give the speech of the characters "them" and "us" tags; "them" being the SS and their concentration-camp guards; "us" being Schindler and the Jews. . . .

No single film can tell all about the *Shoah*; this one could not tell more of Oskar Schindler's life than the years it covered. What it tells, it tells in truth—not including a study of Nazi psychology (except for brief insights into Goeth). I learned from Mr. Gourevitch that "Spielberg has said that he deliberately eschewed interpretation in favor of reporting." Just so.

JANIS DE VRIES
Belle Mead, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

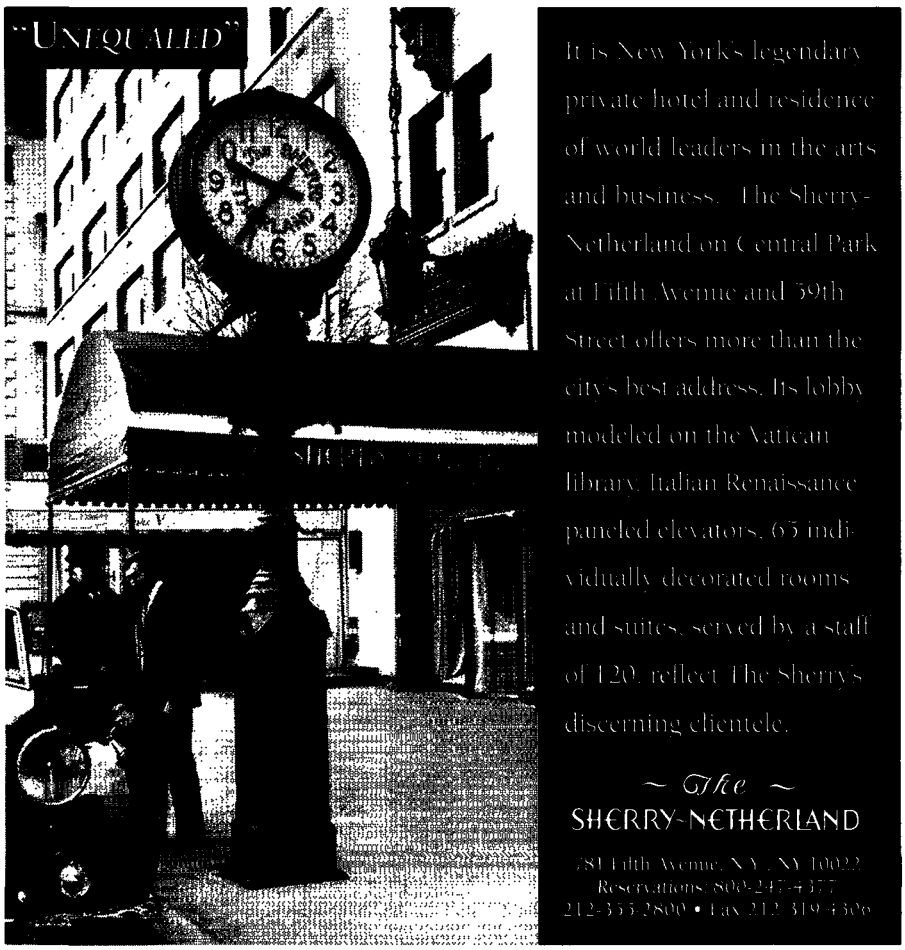
Philip Gourevitch's article is an outstanding example of an army of verbiage wandering over four pages in vain search of a thesis. Having decided not to like the movie, Mr. Gourevitch assigns himself the unhappy task of figuring out why and telling us. The points he makes are more or less trivial, but his biggest problem is that he misses the forest for the trees. The priority in this day and age is to show young people—and older-than-young people who do not know—basically "what happened." Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, Claude Lanzmann's documentary film, *Shoah*, and others along the same line are, of course, outstanding statements, but box-office busts. Short of Spielberg's *Schindler*, we are left with the Holocaust as a made-for-TV movie. *That* would surely make Oskar Schindler "roll over in his Jerusalem grave."

GEORGE HABER
New York Institute of Technology
Old Westbury, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Philip Gourevitch's dissent on *Schindler's List* seems right on target in some respects, e.g., Spielberg's "Jewish caricatures," but way off the mark in others, most notably his criticism of Spielberg for not suggesting a motive for Schindler's heroism.

Schindler was honored for his actions, not for his motives. . . . Mr. Gourevitch says that Spielberg's unfathomable Schindler suggests moral ambiguity in right action. Not so; the action was unambiguously right; the person doing the action, however, was, like all of us I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presume, a complex and complicated human being. . . .

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . To tell of the Holocaust in words, or in movies, or in any other form of communication is to demean the eternal message of the *Shoah*, and that should not be. But to let it fall from worldly memory would be the greater evil. Whatever the shortcomings of his film, Steven Spielberg has contributed as brilliantly as any man could to causing that which should be remembered to be remembered.

RICHARD PENNER
Northbrook, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Philip Gourevitch helped me personally dispel a sense of unease I felt upon viewing the movie. Mr. Gourevitch points to Thomas Keneally's book on Schindler which clearly shows a man disgusted with Nazi atrocities and determined to oppose "the system" by both saving Jews and manufacturing defective munitions. But the movie version diminishes Schindler's transformation into an anti-Nazi resister while fabricating an out-of-character ending showing a pitiful man calling himself a Nazi and criminal while moaning that he could have done more. But, as Mr. Gourevitch explains, this never happened. . . .

The moral awakening Schindler experienced is something millions of people are in need of today. The movie can serve to stimulate thinking, but it will take much to divert many viewers worldwide from a sense that the movie represents adventure and entertainment on a serious subject.

ROBERT J. BONSIGNORE
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Philip Gourevitch's superbly written and irrefutably argued "A Dissent on *Schindler's List*" has my complete assent. I would, however, like to mention two other features of the film which increased my irritation when I saw it.

• The schmaltzy music, which was as necessary as adding salt to a schmaltz herring.

• The inclusion of a scene showing Schindler (Liam Neeson) copulating in bed with one of his courtesans. The depiction of the sexual struggle—accompanied by the usual grunts—has become a mandatory staple of Hollywood films, including this one. . . .

These two features, along with the points raised by Mr. Gourevitch, reinforce the conclusion that Steven Spielberg has Hollywoodized the Holocaust—the most tragic event in history.

MILTON BIRNBAUM
Springfield, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . On reading Philip Gourevitch's article, I thought he was probably being too hard on the film. Later, after seeing it, I thought he was not hard enough. Steven Spielberg . . . has not escaped the animated cartoon style of all his previous work. All the characters are cardboard people, simplistically drawn, representing minuscule . . . aspects of true human character. *Schindler's List* is unmoving and uninvolving, only helping us to distance ourselves from confrontation with the evil that is inherent in fallen man. . . .

ELLIS H. POTTER
Basel Christian Fellowship
Basel, Switzerland

PHILIP GOUREVITCH WRITES:

I stand corrected by Maurice Friedberg's identification of the language spoken by Oskar Schindler's Jewish "investor" as Polish and not Yiddish. Otherwise, however, I hold to my criticisms of Steven Spielberg's version of *Schindler's List*, and of the mindlessly inflated adulation with which the movie has generally been received.

Mr. Friedberg is one of several writers offended by my pointing to the obsession of Spielberg's Jews with money and valuables. Of course I realize that "traditional Jews remove *mezuzot* from their doorposts when there is reason to believe that the next tenants would not be Jews." If this is what Spielberg sought to represent, however, no one unfamiliar with the practice, or who does not know what a *mezuzah* is, would comprehend it—a serious defect in a movie whose partisans claim that it can serve as a definitive account of the destruction of European Jewry for a previously ignorant mass audience.

My purpose in describing the scene in which a Jew, being chased from his apartment by Nazis, tries to grab various valuable objects and only manages to get hold of his *mezuzah* was to convey what the movie *looks* like to a spectator with no prior knowledge of the world it purports to "document." Jewish behavior, I wrote, is viewed in Spielberg's movie entirely from the perspective of the German persecutors, and Jews are given virtually no voice to explain their perspective or their experience.

Several correspondents object to my comparison of the film's Jewish extras to *Der Stuermer* cartoons, suggesting that I must be ashamed of how "we" look. My objection, however, was not to Jewish looks, which I go for, but to the film's ham-fisted approach to those looks as the fieldmarks of an unsavory otherness. Indeed, the scene I referred to—in which Jewish black marketeers desecrate a Cracow cathedral with their dealings (a scene I could not find in Thomas Keneally's "nonfiction novel" which was Spielberg's source for the movie)—is simply a glossy Hollywood remake of any number of blood-libel cartoons. Whatever purpose Spielberg hoped this scene might serve, it certainly does not make Jews appear to movie audiences as "we" appear to "ourselves."

This was also my complaint about the scene in which Jewish children are made to eat jewels wadded in balls of bread. Obviously it is a normal, and prudent, provision to take precious goods when being herded from one's home, but I found it regrettable that Spielberg chose not to show expressions of the familial and spiritual community which often helped Jews to endure their ordeal as much as their salvaged diamonds. Mr. Friedberg maintains that Cracow's Jewish children were "beyond tears and consolation . . . were, in fact, no longer children." But of course they were children, and as countless testimonies of child-survivors make clear, the fact that they were robbed of the traditional shelters of childhood only made them more desperate for the affection and consolations that all children need.

Rabbi Uri D. Herscher stands out among my correspondents for being uncertain about what I had against *Schindler's List*, and why I spoke of it as "the most affirmative film ever made about the Shoah." What I meant, and what I said, is that in the movie's depiction of the Nazi war against the Jews, the audience is largely protected from any intimate knowledge of the people who died.

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But at this point I can hear the protest that, as Steven Goldberg puts it, *Schindler's List* "is not about the Holocaust *per se*; it is about Schindler." Well, I refer Mr. Goldberg to Alfred Lipson and Jonathan Balsam. *Schindler's List*, Mr. Lipson writes, will allow "millions of uninformed viewers" to "learn about the most horrible crime in history." And Mr. Balsam asserts that "the film is not about the plight of a *person* or a *family*. It is about the *Shoah*. . . ."

This confusion is inherent in Spielberg's choice of material. Claude Lanzmann, the director of the nine-hour documentary, *Shoah*, and a self-described admirer of Spielberg, has written that as soon as he heard of the making of *Schindler's List*, he said to himself:

> Spielberg is going to find himself confronted with a dilemma: he cannot recount the story of Schindler without also telling what the Holocaust was; and how can he tell what the Holocaust was in recounting the story of a German who saved 1,100 Jews, since the overwhelming majority of Jews were not saved? . . . No, it did not happen like that for everyone. At Treblinka, or at Auschwitz, the question of salvation was not posed this way at all.

Schindler's List can be expected to stand for some time as *the* primary transmission belt of Holocaust "history" in the world. While the tears of Mr. Lipson's uninformed viewers and of survivors like Norbert Friedman and William Shattan may bring catharsis, they cannot wash away the fact that as a representation of the Holocaust, Spielberg's movie, with its happy ending, is what Lanzmann calls "inverted history" and "kitschy melodrama."

By invoking Lanzmann's name, I realize I may be exposing myself to more charges of "art-house" elitism of the kind that abounds in these letters. William Shattan calls me "a brainy technician with little heart or feeling"; Ruth King calls me "niggardly"; Sam Tischler calls my remarks catty and "picayune"; Allen Bodner decries my "petulance"; Sanford Pinsker accuses me, against all evidence, of "advocating silence"; and James Heft and Ruth Weinshall advise readers to smoke dope before confronting my callous treatment of Spielberg's "object of art."

These populist put-downs smack of a bogus and distinctly condescending middlebrowism. Taken together, they seem to argue that *Schindler's List* is above criticism because it brings an indisputably good message to the great unwashed. The writers of these letters, of course, do not count themselves among the unaware or the unwashed; not one of them claims to have been ignorant of the Holocaust before seeing the movie, or to have entered the theater without knowing in advance with whom he would identify; and none claims to have learned anything from *Schindler's List*. Mr. Pinsker even says I am right to point out the film's "warts," but avers that its disfigured version of the Holocaust is nevertheless good enough for the masses.

The double standard that grants a sacred status to representations of the Holocaust, and to the emotions they stir up, reflects the dangerous trend I described in my article: confusing art with event and commemoration with experience. To judge by the heat of these letters, one might think I had been disputing the facts of the Holocaust itself rather than the manner in which Steven Spielberg *chose* to dramatize some of them in a Hollywood movie. It is incomprehensible to me that so many intelligent people, who do not, I suspect, like being talked down to, should jump on me as a snooty carper for attempting to view this movie soberly and seriously.

Some critics of *Schindler's List*, Lanzmann among them, argue that it is impossible to represent the Holocaust in a dramatic film, or in any kind of fiction. I do not agree. Superb novels have been written about those years, about the process of extermination and also about resistance and survival: André Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just*, Jiri Weil's *Life With a Star*, Primo Levi's *If Not Now, When?*, to name a few. On film, the great artistic representations have been documentaries: Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity* and *Hotel Terminus*, and Lanzmann's *Shoah*. Feature films that have treated the period most succesfully, like Louis Malle's *Au Revoir les Enfants*, have wisely avoided the challenge of representing the Nazi killing machine in full force. But if the his-

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tory of the Holocaust is still not universally known, the problem will not be solved by Hollywood.

Schindler was a remarkable man, and it is essential that the exceptional acts of resistance and defiance during the Holocaust by both Jews and Gentiles be told in any full accounting. But when the wish for heroes is allowed to adulterate history, the consequences are always perverse. A telling side-effect of Spielberg's movie is that several former Nazi functionaries who have faced trials for war crimes—among them Jack Reimer of Lake Carmel, New York, and Paul Touvier in France—have developed what Jeffrey Goldberg of the *Forward* has called a "Schindler defense."

Touvier, who served in a militia loyal to the Gestapo, sought acquittal for the murder of seven Jews on the grounds of extenuating circumstances: he had to kill the seven, he said at his recent trial (at which he was finally convicted), in order to save 93 others. Reimer, whose war record includes participation in at least one mass execution, told Goldberg: "Look at this Schindler. Here was a man who was a Nazi, who was in the Nazi party, and he saved the Jews. Now look at me. I wasn't even a member of the Nazi party. I was not a Nazi. So why won't they believe me when I say I did nothing?"

Such are the tinsel-town hopes that have been stirred by *Schindler's List*. Ben Kingsley, who plays a Jew in the film, has said that Oscars are not enough for Steven Spielberg, he should get the Nobel Peace Prize. This asinine fantasy goes hand in hand with the remark of Jeffrey Katzenberg, head of the Walt Disney film studios, who recently told the Spielberg-crazed *New Yorker* magazine, "I don't want to burden the movie too much, but I think it will bring peace on earth, good will to men."

Meanwhile, back on planet earth, Steven Spielberg hefted his Academy Awards' Oscar, giving thanks to his family and all the little people who made his happy moment possible—you know, "the six million who can't be watching this among the two billion that are watching this telecast tonight." To the many people who left *Schindler's List* feeling "affirmed," I can only say that although I experienced no such catharsis at the movie, Spielberg's words made me want to weep.

Talbottism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One can have thought the USSR an evil empire and Strobe Talbott naive concerning it and still not consider the current announcement of future NATO membership for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic part of an optimum policy for East European security. In military matters it is better to say less and do more. President Clinton has said little and will do less. George Weigel's error, in "Creeping Talbottism" [March], is in thinking that by saying more about NATO now the West will be constrained to do more both now and later. Instead, the West should say less about NATO and more about the European Union (EU). Meaningful NATO/East European military preparation is more important than any announcement, but less likely to occur. A Western announcement of East European membership in the EU, not in NATO, will more likely lead to such preparation. If it does not, the West will at least have done itself less damage than empty talk about NATO.

When one fully articulates the balance-of-power analysis supporting Mr. Weigel's proposal, its weaknesses become apparent. To the West's great good fortune, the USSR accepted a unified Germany within NATO; the Soviet Union then disintegrated and left a turbulent but potentially democratic Russia in its wake, thereby drastically shifting the balance of power in favor of the West. In light of this, Mr. Weigel urges the West to draw a line in future sand, i.e., to announce future East European/NATO membership dates, a proposal he supports with the following considerations:

1. Russia is unlikely to be weaker in the foreseeable future than it is now; thus, it is less able to do anything about such line-drawing now than it will be later. (True.)

2. Russia cannot "legitimately" complain about the line-drawing. (True and false. True from the West's perspective, but even a nonimperialist Russian Defense Minister could be forgiven for believing that, in light of other post-1988 events, such line-drawing openly attempts to shift the balance of power too far.)

3. Drawing the line now will constrain future Western leaders to observe it even if, as is quite likely, some of them are more Talbottic than Talbott. (False. Similar past leaders have demonstrated amazing talent for ignoring even brighter lines.)

4. Refraining from line-drawing now because it may negatively affect Russian prospects for a non-imperial free-market democracy is appeasement. (True only if there isn't a better way to improve East European security without openly slapping a nascently democratic Russia in the face.)

A better solution appears when one reflects on why there is no clamor for France to rejoin, and Sweden to join, NATO. France is a de-facto NATO member; Sweden, it has now been admitted, was a quasi-member all along, of greater military significance due to geography and preparation than official-member Belgium (and without complicating NATO's decision-making). Besides, France already is, and Sweden may this year become, an EU member.

Thus, a better proposal: have NATO in fact coordinate militarily with Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic on a level somewhere between NATO's coordination with France and Sweden, and require East European countries to qualify politically and economically for EU membership in order to obtain openly acknowledged Western military protection. Russian Defense Ministers are more impressed by actual military preparation but more affronted by premature, particularly if empty, NATO membership announcements. EU membership has a primarily nonmilitary rationale, but in Eastern Europe it has strong military implications as well. Moreover, given the low political and economic demands NATO has historically made on its members and the higher ones the EU now makes, East European countries should be required to qualify for the EU to obtain an openly acknowledged Western military shield. The goal of EU membership may do more to inhibit, say, a demagogic Hungarian Prime Minister from pursuing a "*vive* Transylvania *libre*" policy than NATO membership did to inhibit the Greek colonels from adventures in Cyprus.

I do not dare hope that Clinton and Talbott thought through the above in opting for their Partnership-for-Peace solution, though recent EU announcements concerning East European membership

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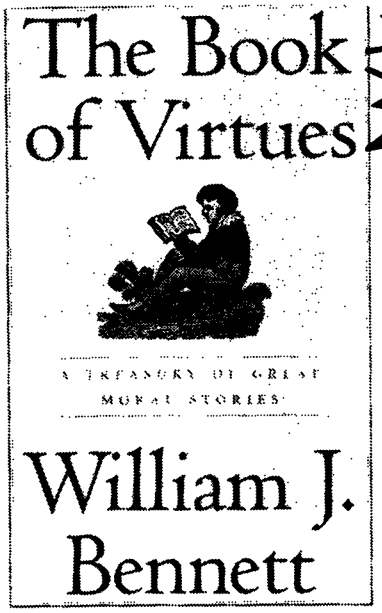

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indicate the EU might have. I am thankful, however, that Clinton did . . . not add the insult to Russia Mr. Weigel proposes to the injury to the West he will commit by his almost certain neglect of the required NATO/East European military preparations.

DOUGLAS HOFFMAN
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Creeping Talbottism," George Weigel either didn't get it or didn't dare say it.

Talbottism has its true roots in the maddening thirst for absolution by those who, either directly or indirectly, but in any case wittingly and calculatedly, supported Hanoi during the Vietnam war, and who now have to live with the fall of the meccas of Leninist-Stalinist Communism worldwide (except in Havana and Pyongyang).

They bet on the wrong horse and lost, but now do not want to concede their loss. That is why they lobbied ardently for President Clinton—the archetype and quintessence of the pro-Hanoi crowd—to lift the embargo on Hanoi.

That is why they can be seen now engaged in a frenzied but futile revisionist attempt to rewrite history by proposing that the defunct Soviet Union did not pose a real threat to the West. Instead of coming to terms with their sorry past and admitting . . . that America was right in containing Soviet expansionism worldwide, including in Vietnam, they vainly dive into a sea of denial and self-delusion.

It must be tough to face the fact of having contributed directly to the suffering and even torture and death of millions of victims of Communism worldwide. Those with a figment of decency must have a hard time in front of the mirror every morning. . . . And even worse, what will they say when asked by their children . . . why they didn't support America's effort to challenge the Soviets in Vietnam?

Escapism seems to be the choice of those attempting a way out, and Talbottism—practiced from the vantage point of most impact, the State Department—provides the best escapism the Clinton crowd could have ever self-servingly devised.

But the problem with this self-prescribed and self-applied therapy is the damage Talbottism causes to others. . . . On one side, its false version of history leads the uninformed in America and elsewhere to the wrong conclusions. And on the other side, highly critical American foreign policy is being molded in light of the fallacies in Talbottism. Therefore, as if Clintonism weren't bad enough, the damage that Talbottism will cause to America and to the rest of the world—as a consequence of being applied in these crucial times when genuine democracy should be cemented in the countries of the former Soviet bloc—will be disastrous.

In the same way that Germans have to be reminded of the wrongs of Nazism, Italians of Fascism, and Japanese of militarism, the peoples of the former Soviet-bloc nations, and particularly those of the ex-Soviet Union itself, should be made aware and reminded of the wrongs of the system that they supported, or at least tolerated.

However, with Talbottism—which unabashedly embraces the "moral-equivalence" sophism—what those peoples are being told is that the West, and America in particular, was as wrong as they were.

America will pay dearly for the historic mistake committed by 43 percent of the electorate in voting for Clinton; Talbottism, among other "isms" in the Clinton brotherhood, will guarantee it.

RENÉ F. GUERRA
Sunnyvale, California

GEORGE WEIGEL WRITES:

Douglas Hoffman's interesting "European Union First" proposal would be more persuasive had several key EU countries, notably France, taken a more positive stance toward the consolidation of free economies and democratic polities in East Central Europe by lowering their protectionist trade barriers, which have been stifling the new democracies' exports. Would a France unwilling to confront its rambunctious and highly-subsidized farmers in order to put its own economic house in order be willing to do so to help the Poles? It seems rather unlikely.

This is not to disparage the possibility of EU membership for the East Central European democracies, which would probably be a very good thing (although one does have to wonder about the effects of the stultifying Euro-bureaucracy on the new democracies); it is simply to point out some of the difficulties inherent in the marriage. Moreover, the eagerness of countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to join NATO as soon as possible suggests that, in these countries' minds at least, NATO is the truly consequential alliance of Western democratic states. On the assumption that these countries know their neighborhood and their interests a bit better than we do, perhaps we should take them more at their word in these matters.

One does have to wonder, however, what the last several months of Clintonian ineptitude in the Balkans have done to NATO. One thing seems certain: without American leadership, NATO is ineffectual, even feckless. And without American leadership, the question of enlarging the sphere of democratic stability in Europe by enlarging the membership of NATO will remain largely moot. One of the lessons of the unhappy 60's that Bill Clinton and Strobe Talbott seem to have brought with them to high office is a diffidence, at times bordering on insouciance, about the American political-military role in the world. Its grave dangers are now on full display, from Pyongyang to Baghdad to Sarajevo.

The Clintons & Whitewater

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lynn Chu's article ["What Did the Clintons Know & When Did They Know It?," March] was a very good summary of the Whitewater scandal, but since its publication many more details have come out—enough to make it possible that Bill Clinton will not last out his term in office.

The Clintons have always had a shallow core constituency. They have no reliable agenda. They have shown a pattern of betraying lifelong friends. Unlike Ronald Reagan or even Lyndon Johnson, who was a power before becoming President, the Clintons have no reservoir of good faith. They have no safety net.

Clinton became President in a three-man race by running as a "New Democrat" and pulling unusually strong support from the business community. Coming from Arkansas, he was never the darling of liberals. He did get liberal support because he promised that, if he were elected, the country would get a "two-for"—Hillary would be

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his partner. Hillary was the great hope of the feminists, minorities, and gays. To further shore up liberal support while he was posturing as a moderate, Clinton chose Al Gore as a running mate. (Picking a running mate who is more popular with the core of your party carries grave risks.)

Hillary and Gore, in their respective ways, are key to President Clinton's future demise—which will be carried out not by conservative Republicans but by liberal Democrats. Despite her skillful performance at her press conference in April, Hillary remains neck-deep in scandal. Her effectiveness as the spear-thrower for liberal causes has been destroyed. Gone are Foster, Nussbaum, Hubbell—her personal appointments. . . .

Now liberals will see they have the chance of a lifetime to get a genuine liberal, unelectable through normal channels, to become President. Gore, the authentic liberal, is on deck. So the important thing to watch from now on is not the Republicans: keep an eye on the liberal media and the Democratic leaders—that is where the action will be.

The following can be expected to make headlines over the next few months:

Once the televised hearings begin, members of the Rose Law Firm, bitter about the Clintons destroying the firm's image, will eagerly step forward to provide new evidence of wrongdoing. Members of the White House staff, many of whom are young and idealistic, will be served subpoenas, resulting in their having to hire criminal lawyers and pay for them out of their own pockets. (Federal law prohibits *pro-bono* services to federal employees.) They, too, will be a ripe source of sordid details. The friends of Bill and Hillary, many of whom benefited, participated, and/or witnessed a pattern of corrupt practices over many years, . . . will become another source of leaks and information and, of course, be the subject of numerous subpoenas and grand-jury appearances.

Once the hearings get going, they will be difficult to stop, and all the questions raised by Lynn Chu will surface again, as the special prosecutor's investigation moves forward. The Democrats will feel increasingly threatened facing this November's elections.

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Peace in the Middle East (2)

Is the peace with Egypt an encouraging example for Israel?

In the on-again/off-again Mid-East Peace negotiations the Arabs expect that, in exchange for peace, the territories that they consider to be "occupied" by Israel be restored to them, specifically, the so-called "West Bank", Gaza, and the Golan Heights.

What are the facts?

Peace with Egypt is the coldest possible. For its agreement to make true peace with Israel, Egypt received the huge Sinai Peninsula in which Israel had invested over $10 billion. It had created flourishing cities, some of the most advanced military and naval installations in the world, and had developed oil fields that would have made it energy independent for the foreseeable future. Without firing a shot, Egypt received all of this, plus generous grants from the United States—$40 billion to date. What Egypt gave in return was a piece of paper. And even that was hedged. It would allow Egypt to join in an "Arab War" against Israel. The peace between Israel and Egypt, which the Israelis had envisioned to be like the peace between Germany and France, turned out, unfortunately, to be the "coldest peace" possible. It is, less of a peace than a de facto state of non-belligerence. The Israeli ambassador in Cairo is isolated and blacklisted and does not participate in any official functions of the Egyptian government. There is practically no trade between the two countries and no cultural exchange. The public sector of Egypt, which constitutes 80% of the total economy is forbidden to do business with Israel. Private enterprises are actively discouraged and often threatened when they try to become engaged with Israeli firms. Israeli firms are barred form submitting tenders for local projects. For "security reasons" Israeli firms are not allowed to participate in trade fairs. Although quite a few Israelis visit Egypt, hardly any Egyptians go to Israel since those who do wish to visit are summoned to the security police for lengthy interrogation.

Not forthcoming on diplomatic front. Many Israelis have been killed in Egypt or on the Egyptian border. The Egyptian media, including the official and semi-official press, are full of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish venom, preaching hatred and prejudice. There have been numerous instances of "crazed" Egyptian soldiers shooting up Israeli buses traveling along the border highways, to the general applause of the state-controlled media. On the diplomatic front, the Egyptians aren't any more forthcoming. Egypt spearheaded the campaign to keeping the "Zionism is racism" resolution in the U.N., contrary to U.S. wishes. Egypt exerts much effort to prevent African countries from establishing or renewing diplomatic relations with Israel. Egyptian diplomats, including Butros-Butros Ghali, now secretary general of the United Nations, lobbied fervently against the loan guarantees that Israel needed to absorb and to settle the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who have already arrived or will still arrive form the former Soviet Union.

> "Israel's present government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in the current peace negotiations."

The saving grace for Israel in its very cold peace with Egypt is that the Sinai is very large, and serves as a buffer zone. But in the Golan Heights, which the Syrians wish to have returned in exchange for "peace", and the "West Bank" and Gaza, which the Palestinians whish to have given to them as a "reward" for stopping the "intifada", there is no room at all for buffer zones. Although autonomy for the native Arab population is definitely an Israeli policy goal and a commitment under the Camp David Accords, the "West Bank" and Gaza and the Golan cannot possibly be surrendered to another sovereignty for any foreseeable future. It would make Israel totally indefensible. If the peace with Egypt is an example of what peace with Syria or with the Palestinians would look like, Israel's present government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in the current negotiations and not to entrust its survival to empty promises. Only when the Arabs truly accept Israel as part of the Middle East should any further "land for peace" adjustments be considered.

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Richard Nixon resigned when the Republican leadership walked into the White House and told him he had lost all credibility. The next day he was on a chopper—phlebitis and all.

Some day, sooner than November 1996, the Democratic leadership will take the walk to the White House. The precedent has been set. . . .

HERBERT WATSON
New York City

Parents & Children

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Are Parents Bad for Children?" [March], Dana Mack poses a question which is loaded with potential for misinterpretation. A more suitable title might have been, "Have You Stopped Beating Your Children?"

Miss Mack gives the reader a grossly distorted critique of Alice Miller's *For Your Own Good*. I have read this book repeatedly because of the strong words which Miller has for parents who beat their children to enforce obedience. Miller insists that parents have a right to discipline their children, but they have no right to punish them. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?

Discipline, which comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, means "to teach." Discipline does not mean to hit, to push, to shove, or to force. The parent who knows how to discipline a child teaches that child how to control his behavior in an acceptable manner. Discipline inspires love between the teacher and the child.

Punishment is the willful infliction of pain to enforce obedience. A parent who believes in punishing a child for disobedience believes that his main task is to control the behavior of that child. If the child resists, the parent believes he has a right to break the will and the spirit of the child so that the child will learn to do exactly as he is told. An abusive parent will use fear, force, and pain to make certain that the child knows just who is boss. Punishment inspires hatred between the parent and the child—hatred which the child must suppress at all costs.

Would any adult who is free to change his job continue to work for a boss who regularly beat him with a whip when he failed to meet his sales quota? Of course not! Yet a child cannot leave a parent who whips him, curses him, and tells him that he is a useless dreg who is unfit to live in the family.

My mother used to beat me with a razor strap whenever I displeased her or made a mistake. Those beatings were so painful that I eventually shut down my body so that I could feel nothing. I grew up with a profound distrust of any person wielding authority and learned to avoid contact with people.

Has Dana Mack ever felt the pain of a razor strap lashing across her back? . . .

I believe that Alice Miller's portrait of Adolf Hitler in *For Your Own Good* is the most profound analysis I have yet read of Hitler and offers the best explanation of why he had such power to persuade the German people to follow him.

Hitler's father beat him with a razor strap for the slightest infraction of the rules. Adolf, who could not strike back at his father, endured those beatings with a stoic calm, yet burned with rage and anger toward his father. What happened to those feelings? Did Adolf forget? *Not on your life!* Those feelings of rage and hatred toward his father, which he had to suppress at all costs, emerged with full force when he became an adult. Now he had the power to inflict pain and punishment on weaker persons. Now he could release his venom at a target which could not fight back—the Jewish people. . . .

A person who has been beaten by a parent learns that the way to resolve a conflict is with a fist. The boy who is beaten grows up to be the man who beats his wife. There is no great mystery in this matter.

A person who believes and practices the principles of democracy will not beat his children in a dispute, because such a man believes that every person has a right to express his opinion—including his own children.

A person who believes in the principles of fascism will beat his children in an argument to settle the matter because the core of fascist belief is that "might makes right." Or to put in the vernacular, "We'll just see who's boss!" From that premise, such a person will lash out with a razor strap, a stick, an ax handle, or anything he can get his hands on to smash and break the will and spirit of someone smaller and weaker—including his own children.

I take exception to the ideas of Dana Mack and her distorted criticism of Alice Miller. I suggest that Miss Mack stay in her ivory tower at the Institute for American Values.

HAROLD THEISEN
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dana Mack castigates Dr. Benjamin Spock for undermining traditional disciplinary methods that relied on anger and reprobation. To drive home her point, she cites the following example of Spock's permissiveness:

> In *Baby and Child Care*, he [Spock] suggested that parents might respond to school-age stealing by "thinking over" whether their child might "need more . . . approval at home," and even a raise in allowance!

After reading this passage, I decided to look up what Spock had actually said in my well-worn and yellowing copy of *Baby and Child Care* (1962). In the section on stealing, I could find no evidence that Spock advised raising a young thief's allowance, but I did read the following:

> It is essential that a child know clearly that his parents disapprove of any stealing and insist on immediate restitution. . . . If you are pretty sure that your child (or pupil) has stolen something, tell him so, be firm about knowing where he got it, insist on restitution. In other words, don't make it easy for him to lie. (If a parent accepts lies too easily, it's as if he were condoning the theft.)

It seems to me, then, that Miss Mack's assertion that Spock "turned the ideal of good parenthood on its head" is not a fair one. On the contrary—he advised parents to be firm and forthright in their disapproval of stealing.

JOHN P. BOZZONE
Ithaca, New York

DANA MACK WRITES:

John P. Bozzone seems to have missed Dr. Benjamin Spock's advice to parents on childhood stealing: "It is time to think over whether the child needs more affection and approval at home, and help in making closer friendships outside. This is the time to give him, if possible, an allowance of

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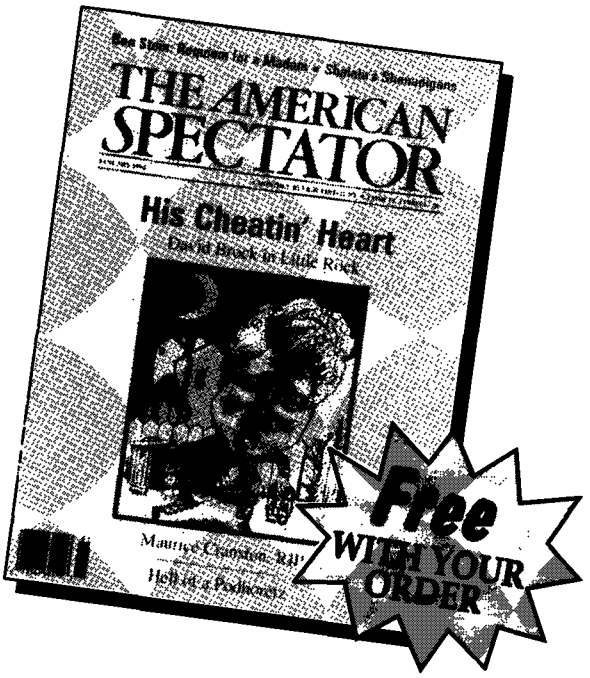

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about the same size as that of the other children he knows." This sentence, which appears later in the section from which Mr. Bozzone quotes, is characteristic of Spock's predilection for viewing childhood transgressions as indications of deprivation and psychic suffering. Yes, Spock does advise parents to insist on restitution of stolen objects, but he also advises them to sympathize with the child who steals, and even to make amends for the alleged need which provoked the stealing. The problem with this approach, of course, is that to offer children amends for stealing is to justify the act.

Notwithstanding my sympathy for Harold Theisen's difficult childhood, I am immediately struck by his assertion that punishment "is the willful infliction of pain to enforce obedience." That, of course, is not at all a definition of *punishment*; that is more accurately a definition of *abuse*. But then, these very separate things are today often confused.

Few parents teach obedience out of willfulness, and few parents teach obedience to themselves, *per se*. Rather, most parents teach obedience to the moral injunctions, rules of personal safety, and social forms by which they live, and which they know are best for their children. And they see occasional punishment as an important, if unpleasant, aspect of their parental duty to cultivate children into responsible members of family and community.

The idea behind "punishment," I should think, is to impress upon a child, by means of some slight sacrifice on his part, the pain he may have inflicted on others by a wayward action. Moreover, when a parent punishes, he demonstrates to his children his own unwavering regard for good character and conduct.

Mr. Theisen reiterates one of Alice Miller's most popular ideas: that traditional family life, in asserting the absolute authority of mothers and fathers over children, is a training ground for fascism and social violence. Miller's polemical depiction of 19th-century German child-rearing conventions is, of course, designed to convince the uncritical reader that there is something to this idea. But her theories, unfortunately, do not hold up to the scrutiny of social science.

Not even the subtle minds of the Frankfurt School for Social Research got very far with the thesis that Nazism emanated from an old-world, "authoritarian" German family structure. And today, in studying the steady surge of juvenile crime and violence, social scientists find that it is not at all associated with "authoritarian" methods of child-rearing. Rather, they find that juvenile delinquents are overwhelmingly children who come from families where there is no consistent authority figure present.

"Talking to the Enemy"

To the Editor of Commentary:

Thank you for publishing Avner Mandelman's story, "Talking to the Enemy" [February]. Besides being a superb "thriller," it says a lot about the subtle connections between private and public morality.

Joseph Shattan
Silver Spring, Maryland

China Today

To the Editor of Commentary:

Cultures are always evolving, and it may be difficult or even impossible to determine to what extent developments are influenced by contact with other societies. Charles Horner, in "China on Our Minds" [January], contrasts the analyses of 30 years ago, when "it seemed that the great tradition of China would prove no match for an all-conquering Westernism," with current observations that tell us about "the spirit of capitalism and Confucianism."

Mr. Horner is less than optimistic about the future of political liberty in China: "For imagining a democratized China in our age of Western confusion involves conviction and commitment to principle as great as the one which envisioned a Christianized China in an earlier age of Western certitude." My own experience as a teacher at Hebei Univesity in Baoding, China, during the spring semesters of 1984 and 1989 leads me to believe that China is extremely open to Western ideas, for better or worse.

Marxism is ignored but nevertheless honored in China. I spoke to students and colleagues who dismissed socialism as a failure, but grew defensive when I suggested that the cruelty and violence of Mao's China and Stalin's USSR had a common ideological ancestor. Marx teaches only kindness, they said. The Cultural Revolution was an expression of a flaw in the Chinese character, they added, finding it easier to blame their own people than Marx. Indeed, I believe that China's current love affair with capitalism is merely negative Marxism—a reversal rather than a rejection of the faith China once had in Communism.

Paradoxically, while claiming that economic systems hold the answer to all questions, many Chinese people I spoke to expressed great admiration for Christianity. I would not be surprised if Christianity were one day to become as powerful in China as it is now in South Korea.

George Jochnowitz
College of Staten Island
Staten Island, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

Charles Horner again shows a well-focused ability to assess trends . . . in Asia. As in his previous article, "China on the Rise" [December 1992], he is essentially correct in his analysis. . . . Anyone with any experience of current developments in "Greater China" can, like Mr. Horner, perceive the inevitable writing on the wall of history.

In the spring of 1992, I visited China under the auspices of the International Center for Criminal Justice and the Pacific Rim Institute of the American Jewish Committee. As a *MeiGuo You Tai* (American Jew), I was given extraordinary access to persons and institutions that allowed me a profound . . . look at the rise of neo-Confucianism in China. . . .

Perhaps most relevant in this connection . . . is the Chinese acceptance of business and "capitalism," going back 5,000 years, which was interrupted for only a single generation under Mao. The Chinese economy is currently experiencing an almost exponential growth, fueled by a basically hard-working, ambitious, and competent workforce. There is an enormous reserve of natural resources that is beginning to be tapped to further this growth (with possible ecological ramifications and accompanying problems). . . .

Let me also point out the relevance to Israel and world Jewry of the rise of China. . . . There is a positive regard for Occidental Jews in China. Young Chinese are taught in Junior Middle School that they are part of 5,000 years of

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continuity and tradition that is matched only by the *You-Tairen* who are socially and historically the most like them. Chinese traditionally regard Jews as kindred spirits in the "Custodianship of Ancient Traditions and Continuity." Thus, the disclosure of secret diplomatic and even military ties between Israel and China dating back to the 1950's should not have come as a surprise. Beijing and Shanghai currently abound with Israelis who are more than tourists and actually the vanguard of major economic ties between the two nations and peoples. In Shanghai I was even a guest of the Judaic Studies Association and the Center of Israel Studies. . . .

The development of China has reflected the success of the Han ethnic group (94 percent of the current Chinese population) in absorbing and assimilating even their conquerors as well as the triumph of benevolent authoritarian leaders and elites in productively managing titanic . . . populations. The concept of benevolent elites that efficiently manage society is correctly perceived by Mr. Horner as a tempting model for Western intelligentsia, often with their own vision of how they themselves might play such a role. The neo-Confucianism that now permeates Asia has little connection with, or ideological commitment to, the now-defunct Soviet model that China followed in the 1950's. The current . . . model for China is the popular authoritarian state successfully achieved by Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore. By American standards, Singapore is an often oppressive state which administers swift retribution for perceived criminal violations such as littering, improper hygiene, and drug trafficking. It is also a society that has the support of the majority of its citizens who have essentially traded democratic freedoms and individual prerogatives for safe and clean streets and economic comforts.

But it would be a serious mistake to judge these uniquely Asian manifestations through Americocentric perceptions. . . . During a visit to Shanghai I had the great fortune to meet and discuss the criminal-justice system with the Chief Judge of Shanghai, Li Hai-Qing. . . . His . . . view is that the most basic human right is the right not to have one's freedom infringed by criminals. . . . He also

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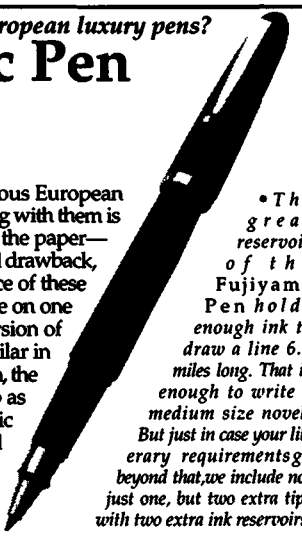

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said that the American system of condemning people to death and then subjecting them to ten or more years of expensive appeals before carrying out the sentence is both barbarically cruel and wasteful. I submit that while this view is essentially Chinese and Asian, it attracts much sympathy and even envy in an America that is subjected to the excesses of crime and social dysfunction. We should also face the objective fact that while we might have strong reservations about the conduct of the Chinese vis-à-vis "human rights," we are still the nation with the highest number of incarcerated persons on the planet.

I was able to view the reality of prison labor at Shanghai prison, where I toured the prison workshop and observed inmates making cheap sneakers for discount shoe stores in the U.S. and massive rolls of counterfeit worsted wool and Scottish tweed for the British and Irish markets. The reply of the prison staff to a question about the use of prisoners to compete in the world market was that prisoners needed to pay for their own incarceration rather than having it paid for by law-abiding citizens. . . . Transgressions or violations of penal discipline are swiftly and brutally punished. But good behavior, "progress," and the development of a "good attitude" are just as quickly rewarded. . . .

It would be obtuse and irresponsible to claim that these methods would be worthwhile and practical in an American setting, despite being obviously attractive to many Americans. But does this not also compel us to recognize that many American values and views may be inappropriate and impractical for China and Asia? . . .

The real power one nation has over another is that of making available ideas, values, and concepts that can be productively used by the other society, thereby increasing its susceptibility to further influence. The drawing back of the U.S. after the Tiananmen tragedy, therefore, was a likely error in that it prevented this country from using social, academic, political, and, most effectively, economic means to bolster alternatives to the brutal direction taken by China in 1989. There is an enormous wealth of ideas, values, technology, and resources . . . that beg to be released through the open interaction of the Chinese and American people. The rise of China in the 21st century could easily be linked to a renewal and rise of the U.S. The primary question is, do we have the will and strength of commitment to take advantage of what is readily available?

MAX WINKLER
Denver, Colorado

CHARLES HORNER WRITES:

George Jochnowitz's experience as a visiting teacher in China, repeated many times by others, and reinforced by the experiences of the tens of thousands of Chinese who have studied, and who are studying, in the United States would seem to provide the best corrective to my own circumspection. These exchanges can only help in creating a climate in China more open to modern ideas about political liberty and human rights. Whatever else happens in Sino-American relations, one hopes that they will be multiplied. On the other hand, if there are Chinese who profess, by Mr. Jochnowitz's own testimony, a high regard for both Marxism and Christianity, that is another reminder of the obstacles to real cross-cultural understanding that still remain.

Of the many points raised by Max Winkler, I would offer a special caution about two. The first is his characterization of the Chinese penal system, based on his brief and controlled access to it. There is, in fact, substantial evidence that the Chinese gulag is as tough and as brutal as its Soviet inspiration. So Mr. Winkler should not believe that he saw anything like the "reality of prison labor" during his visit to Shanghai. As for the relationship between China and Israel, China has indeed had military relations with the Jewish state. It has also exported weapons to Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. These practices do not reflect high regard for Israelis, Arabs, or Iranians as such, but rather longstanding and characteristically supple Chinese diplomacy.

German Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am grateful to Ron Chernow for writing *The Warburgs*, and to Jonathan D. Sarna for reviewing it in your February issue. There is a personal motive for my gratitude toward Felix and Frieda Schiff Warburg in particular, because in 1908 Felix built his French Renaissance chateau at 1109 Fifth Avenue, and in 1944 his widow donated it to the Jewish Theological Seminary to house its Judaica collection—so the splendid Jewish Museum is on my block.

For those whose interest in German Jewry has been stirred, I commend Marvin Lowenthal's classic *The Jews of Germany: A Story of Sixteen Centuries* (Longmans, 1936). Lowenthal also wrote articles on the subject in the *Menorah Journal*, as did others. . . . Most poignant for me is the memoir, "The Émigrés" (Spring-Summer 1956), by my mother, Ruth Sapin Hurwitz. She tells of the years our apartment on Riverside Drive became a virtual salon frequented by German (and later French) Jews who managed to escape in the mid-30's (I was in high school then); she helped orient them, tutoring them in English and American history and government.

Among the guests in our home, she relates, were Rabbi Hugo Hahn from Essen and his wife, Anna; he was "tall, sturdily built, blue-eyed, and fair." A grim episode provides a footnote to the observations of Chernow and Mr. Sarna regarding the advanced assimilation of Jews in Germany, which made Nazi persecution all the more ironic. On Black Thursday, November 10, 1938,

> the Hahns were to see their beautiful new synagogue in Essen, and their home with their library containing many old and irreplaceable treasures, deliberately set afire and completely destroyed. . . . A Nazi party official and a storm trooper had arrived . . . While waiting for the rest of their gang, one of these Nazis, a dark sinister man, grabbed an apple from the fruit bowl on the buffet and began to devour it. Just then the two new Nazis rushed in. Mistaking Rabbi Hahn for a member of their own party, one of them sneered, pointing at the greedy apple-eater: "Just look at the dirty Jew! We're going to burn down his house and his synagogue and he stands there eating fruit."

The aptly named synagogue Habonim ["The Builders"], on West 66th Street in New York City, serves as a living memorial to the vanished Jewish community of Essen. . . .

DAVID LYON HURWITZ
New York City

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The Homeless

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ronald Reagan's callousness toward the mentally ill is mainly responsible for the large numbers of them who live on the streets in California. That is a fact which I have rarely seen mentioned by any writers on the subject of homelessness. Thus, although Susan Wiviott, in her review of *A Nation in Denial* by Alice S. Baum and Donald W. Burnes [Books in Review, February], points out that great numbers of homeless are not just ordinary folk who lack housing but sick people, she does not mention Reagan's role in creating that situation. Many, if not most, of the homeless may indeed be people who need professional help, and they make the streets of our cities unpleasant, even dangerous, because they are not getting either professional help or housing.

Prior to the summer of 1967, when then-Governor Ronald Reagan used his line-item veto to destroy California's mental hospitals, the mentally ill, and many alcoholics, were getting help within the state hospitals. Those institutions were not idyllic places prior to 1967, but under Pat Brown's Democratic administration, as well under the preceding Republican administrations, the state mental hospitals were being upgraded into effective and humane treatment facilities. . . .

Furthermore, plans were well under way to establish community-based mental-health facilities with adequate budgets so that patients could be closer to their families and friends. The key to the success of that program was to be the transferring of funds from the state hospitals to the community-based facilities.

I saw all this as a state employee who often had occasion to visit state hospitals on official business, and later as a union representative. Frequently, I was panhandled by patients who wanted a little change to buy some item at the hospital canteen. I learned to distinguish a patient from a staff member a block away.

One of the first things I noticed in 1967, after Reagan had used his line-item veto to destroy the mental-health system, was the number of former state-hospital patients on the streets of San Francisco. As before, I could recognize them a block away. As before, they panhandled me for spare change. The big difference was that they did not have a regular place to eat or sleep, and they were not getting much, if any, treatment. The money Reagan took from the state hospitals did not go to community-based facilities; it went somewhere else.

We cannot go back to the old mental-hospital system, but for their sakes and ours, let us do something to help the mentally ill (including drug addicts and alcoholics) who are making our city streets such unpleasant places. After we care for the mentally ill, the ordinary folk who are homeless because they are down on their luck will become more visible.

HUGH SHEEHAN
Fremont, California

SUSAN WIVIOTT WRITES:

I agree with Hugh Sheehan that we need to provide long-term residential care—be it in larger facilities or small community-based settings—for the severely mentally ill who are homeless. Although I am not familiar with the specific history of deinstitutionalization in California, the process described by Mr. Sheehan has been going on, in roughly similar fashion, throughout the country for the last 35 years.

As the authors of *A Nation in Denial* point out in their book, 442,000 beds available nationwide in state institutions for the mentally ill—80 percent of the total—were eliminated between 1955 and 1985. New York State, for example, had about 93,000 inpatient psychiatric beds in 1955. By 1980, the number was down to approximately 22,700; and by 1992, the number had been further reduced to about 11,500 beds. Plans call for cutting the number of remaining beds by almost half by the end of the century. Thus, even after it became apparent that there were not enough community-based facilities to meet the needs of the mentally ill, and that without a place to go, many of these people would become homeless, the cuts continued. These cuts have taken place under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

The reason for this wave of deinstitutionalization was neither primarily political nor fiscal. Rather, it resulted, in good part, from the discovery of psychotropic drugs, which have made it possible for large numbers of the mentally ill to live outside highly structured hospital settings, and from court rulings, which made it legally difficult to institutionalize even the very ill against their wishes. In other words, large institutions for the mentally ill became both medically and legally obsolete.

Unfortunately, in many parts of the country, including New York and, according to Mr. Sheehan, California, the less-restrictive community facilities meant to replace the state hospitals have never materialized in numbers sufficient to meet the needs of the homeless mentally ill. As a result, as Mr. Sheehan rightly points out, large numbers of people, many also abusing drugs and alcohol, have been left to fend for themselves.

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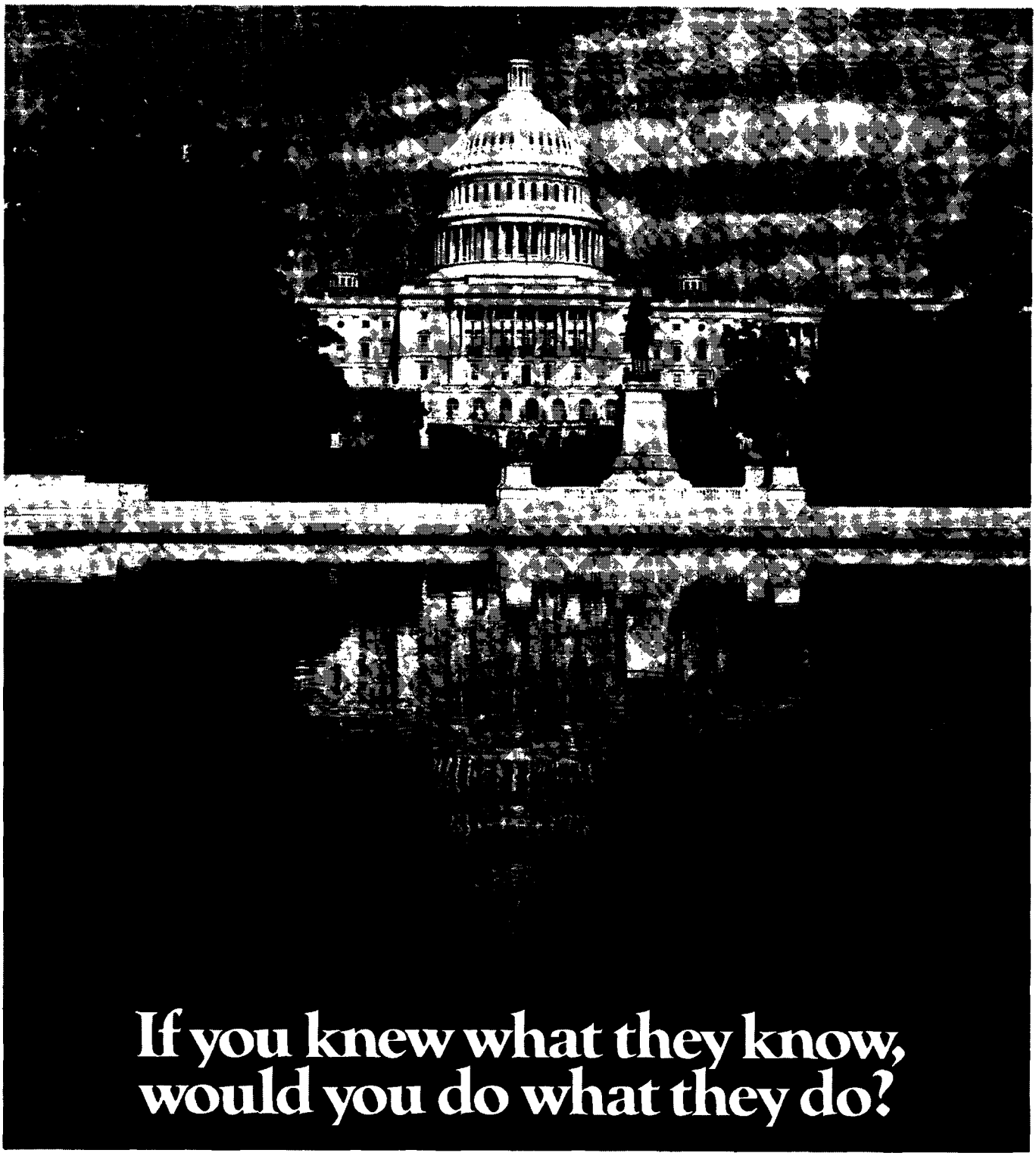

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Furtive Smokers—and What They Tell Us About America

Peter L. Berger

THERE are scenes—sometimes dramatic, sometimes quite ordinary—which can disclose the inner essence of an entire society. Thousands of people holding their breath in a Spanish arena as the matador, sword drawn, advances toward the bull in the moment of truth. A rainy evening in a Swiss city, with no cars in sight, as a few pedestrians patiently wait for the light to change to green before crossing the street. Now, with both Spain and Switzerland being sucked into the homogenizing culture of the new Europe, these two images may become obsolete, to be replaced by others more pertinent to the new realities.

In America the prototypical scene used to be the solitary cowboy riding off into the sunset, or alternatively, deputized as sheriff, riding into town to set things right. Despite the complaints of sundry communitarians about the excesses of individualism in America, that image too no longer seems pertinent. A new one suggests itself, and the recent harsh winter adds poignancy to it: a group of people huddled together in the snow outside an office building, furtively puffing on their cigarettes. Passers-by ignore them or make mocking remarks. The smokers do not respond, unless it is to apologize for not being able to kick the habit. The apologies do not seem to placate the contemptuous passers-by.

The great 19th-century pathologist Rudolf Virchow is said to have opened one of his lectures to medical students with the following words: "Gentlemen, today I will expound to you the omnipotence of God by way of the anatomy of the louse." By itself, the anti-smoking phenomenon will hardly be high on anyone's list of pressing concerns in America today. However, its anatomy may serve to illuminate at least three much broader matters: the way in which social movements can achieve success in this country; the rise to power of the New Class; and the condition of American individualism, past and present.

PETER L. BERGER is University Professor at Boston University. His books include *The Pyramids of Sacrifice, The Capitalist Revolution, The War Over the Family* (with Brigitte Berger), and, most recently, *A Far Cry: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity.*

I

THE anti-smoking campaign has been among the most successful movements of recent years. Starting out in the 1970's as one of many marginal health cults, comparable to, say, the anti-fluoridation movement, it achieved in about two decades virtually everything it had set out to do—or so it seems at the moment.

Public anxiety about smoking began rising in the 1960's, with the publication of various studies linking cigarettes to lung cancer and other diseases of the respiratory system. The Surgeon General issued reports on these studies and Congress responded by legislating increasingly blunt warnings to be placed on cigarette packs. This publicity had clear effects. The percentage of smokers in the American population went into a steady decline. Increasingly, public spaces were divided into smoking and nonsmoking sections. Congress, despite lobbying by the powerful tobacco industry and resistance by members from tobacco-growing states, went ahead with various restrictions—limiting cigarette advertising, banning smoking on domestic flights, and the like.

Not satisfied with its efforts on the legislative front, the anti-smoking movement turned to litigation. Tobacco companies were sued by individuals who allegedly had contracted diseases as a result of smoking. These suits were fought ferociously by the companies and, until recently, the courts did not favor the plaintiffs. Still, the movement made steady if slow progress; it lost its marginal status and became highly professional in its campaigns. Most importantly, it gained allies in key segments of the government bureaucracy (such as the Office of the Surgeon General) and in prestigious nongovernmental organizations (such as the American Cancer Society).

Then, in the early 1990's, a huge acceleration in the anti-smoking movement's "long march through the institutions" took place. It was triggered by the appearance of reports purporting to demonstrate that smoking was harmful not only

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to smokers but also to nonsmokers as a result of what came to be called "environmental tobacco smoke" (ETS). The anti-smoking movement had issued such reports before, but now these were endorsed by the Surgeon General and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The advance of the anti-smoking movement reached a triumphal crescendo with the coming of the Clinton administration. One of Hillary Rodham Clinton's first acts as First Lady was to declare the White House a smoke-free zone. One federal agency after another entered the anti-smoking campaign, accompanied by state and local government bodies across the country. The mood was now unabashedly triumphant, even gloating. Typical of this mood was the stated goal of the anti-smoking program of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to "institutionalize social norms leading to a tobacco-free Massachusetts." The director of the program, Gregory Connolly, put it more graphically: "It won't be long until the only place someone will be able to smoke in Massachusetts will be the Boston Common."

In 1979 a spokesman for the anti-smoking movement defined its view of smoking as an activity that should be limited to consenting adults in private. At the time, this statement seemed wildly utopian. Today, a short fifteen years later, it appears to be on the brink of becoming a legally enforced "social norm" in the United States. How can this development be explained?

If one were to ask this question of anyone who believes in the anti-smoking cause, the answer would be very simple: the harmful consequences of smoking have been scientifically established, and both the public and government are responding rationally to these findings.

There is some truth in this answer, at least with regard to the harmful effect of smoking on smokers. To be sure, the evidence is statistical rather than clinical, as the tobacco industry has protested all along. Yet when statistical correlations reach a certain magnitude (as they have especially done in the linkage of cigarette smoking with lung cancer), it is indeed rational to deduce a causal connection. Put simply: it is almost certainly true that smoking is a health-endangering activity for smokers. The protestations of the tobacco industry, then, have been disingenuous and are rightly ascribed to its obvious vested interests.

It must also be observed, however, that vested interests are not limited to one side of this debate. There are by now very strong vested interests on the part of the anti-smoking movement and its bureaucratic allies, and they too have all along been using scientific findings selectively and even misusing them in the service of their cause. For example, there are data showing cigarette-smoking to be far more hazardous than cigar- and pipe-smoking, but these data are ignored in the simple propagandistic slogan that smoking kills. Nor does the anti-smoking campaign differentiate the individual who smokes two packs of cigarettes a day from the one who smokes, say, two cigarettes a day.

Be all this as it may, a reasonable person looking at the evidence must reach the conclusion that ceasing to smoke would be a health-enhancing move.

On the other hand, the anti-smoking movement's claims concerning the effects of ETS are not, to put it mildly, comparably compelling. The main salvo in the attack on ETS was an EPA report, *Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking*, purporting to summarize studies linking ETS and lung cancer published between 1982 and 1990. Unlike the earlier studies on the effects of active smoking, which (at least initially) were undertaken by scientists with no vested interest in the outcome, the panels cited and given credence in the EPA report were studded with individuals strongly committed to the anti-smoking cause.

But the deficiencies of the EPA report go beyond the evident bias of some of its key witnesses. John Luik, in a recent article in *Bostonia*, points out that the report ignored studies which did not support the desired conclusion, and when even seemingly supportive studies were not supportive enough, the guidelines on acceptable levels of statistical confidence were changed.

Even more damagingly, Luik asserts that the EPA policy guide on workplace ETS was actually written before the assessment of the evidence was completed. His lapidary summation of this use of "science" applies not only to the case at hand but to many other current policy debates: "Given that the right conclusions must be reached and that the data do not support that conclusion, one must manipulate the data and revise the guidelines."

The mindset behind this political corruption of the scientific ethic is beautifully captured in Luik's quotation of a prominent epidemiologist, commenting on the EPA's use of data: "Yes, it's rotten science, but it's in a worthy cause. It will help us to get rid of cigarettes and to become a smoke-free society."

"Rotten science" is also behind some of the movement's other claims. Thus, the number of Americans who allegedly die as a result of smoking keeps changing. For a while, it was given as 300,000 every year. Then it was upped to 420,000. A recent government statement referred to "close to half a million." And the deaths attributed annually to ETS are now being given as 3,000—about equal, as someone has wickedly pointed out, to the deaths due to bicycle accidents. Should we then ban bicycles or, for that matter, automobiles, which cause more than 50,000 deaths per year?

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CLEARLY something else is at work in the success of the anti-smoking campaign than the drawing of logical practical conclusions from the findings of science. And that something else is a fit between deep-seated fears, the propaganda of a highly committed movement, and the vested interests of powerful groups or institutions. It is a fit that developed, in part spontaneously and in part out of a conscious strategy, as the anti-smoking movement linked up with much broader forces in American society.

The underlying fear, of course, is the fear of death. Cancer, more than any other disease, represents this fear at its most intense. It was captured powerfully in a TV commercial, much broadcast in the early 1980's, which showed an actor who had been featured as the cowboy in the advertisements for Marlboro cigarettes and who subsequently fell ill with throat cancer. Here was an icon of the smoking culture, breathing painfully through a tube while whispering his warnings to those who still failed to heed the danger.

Yet even as belief in the harmful effects of smoking spread, the movement faced a formidable obstacle in its desire to get government involved in the war against tobacco. For the idea was still strong in America that individuals were free to harm themselves, and that it was not the business of government to protect people against their own choices. True, there was also the Puritan heritage, which did tend to see government as a purveyor and enforcer of virtue. Prohibition was the crowning glory of this heritage. All the same, Puritan impulses were rather muted in the post-1960's culture and the anti-smoking movement had to overcome a widely held sentiment that, harm or no harm, everyone should be allowed to do his own thing.

A way, therefore, had to be found to argue that smokers harmed not only themselves but others. In other words, an "innocent bystander" had to be uncovered. In the early 1980's two such arguments emerged.

The first pertained to "social costs," and went as follows: the smoker injures himself, but in doing so he also makes others pay for this injury. Everyone's medical costs go up because of the smoker's illnesses; the price of government welfare programs and private insurance rises because of the dependents left behind in the wake of the smoker's premature death; and society is deprived of the smoker's contribution to the gross domestic product as he becomes ill and dies. In the service of this argument, statistics—this time a fanciful combination of epidemiology and econometrics—were duly produced to show the magnitude of the alleged costs.

The argument did not catch on. It was too complicated in itself, and it was open to too many commonsensical objections. After all, there are few activities engaged in by individuals that do not impose costs on others, and to single out smoking seemed arbitrary.

The other argument pertained to ETS and the alleged harm of passive smoking to nonsmokers, and this one did indeed catch on, proving crucial in the current rush to enlist government coercion in the march toward a "smoke-free society."

The anti-smoking movement affords a recipe for success that, *mutatis mutandis*, can be useful to many other social movements. Find a deep-seated fear. Launch a propaganda campaign that persuades a large segment of the public that what they fear is an imminent danger. Find allies in government and in reputable nongovernmental institutions with an interest in organizing measures against the putative danger. Finally, unleash the full armory of government power in support of the movement's cause.

II

BACK to the scene of furtive smokers huddling in the cold and to the puzzling question it inevitably raises: why don't these people fight back? One reason may be that many smokers have come to believe that their habit does in fact harm not only themselves but others; feeling guilty and ashamed, they are quite prepared to accept the contempt heaped on them by all too many of their fellow citizens.

But this explanation begins to seem a little thin when one recalls all the other similarly apologetic shuffles by those cast as villains in recent campaigns to promote virtue: white males meekly accepting denials of employment and promotion as members of an unjustly privileged class; whites of any gender humbly taking insults from black racists; men awkwardly stumbling through the tongue-twisters of feminist syntax to demonstrate their penitent renunciation of male chauvinism; parents listening respectfully to the gibberish of the educationists in charge of miseducating their children; and so on.

When all these campaigns first started out, there were confident predictions of a great backlash: surely people would not put up with this! Yet they did. They do. There have been flurries of resistance here and there, but no great backlash has materialized on any of these issues. Regardless of which political party is in control, the juggernaut that is reconstructing America in the image of the new virtue is moving ahead—propagated by the media and the educational establishment, endorsed by the great majority of the intellectual elite, approved by the courts, and increasingly enforced by government on all levels.

This development—of which the anti-smoking campaign forms only one part—cannot be understood without reopening a discussion that flared up in the early 1970's and then petered out: the discussion concerning the so-called New Class. A rather infelicitous term (originating as an ironic

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twist on Milovan Djilas's use of the same phrase to describe the elite of Titoist Yugoslavia), it referred to a new group of professionals in advanced industrial society who made their living from the production and distribution of nonmaterial or symbolic knowledge and services. These were people in the educational establishment, the media of mass communications, therapy in all its forms, "life-style engineers," and "moral entrepreneurs" (the last two terms were coined more recently by Hansfried Kellner and James Hunter, respectively) in both the public and the private sector.

Historically, this stratum derives from the late-19th-century intelligentsia, which, among other traits, was characterized by its marginality and its basic antagonism toward the solid bourgeoisie. The new knowledge class is much larger, but it shares with the earlier intelligentsia the consciousness of being a cultural elite as well as the hostility toward mainline bourgeois society and the allegedly grubby capitalism on which this society is based.

In Lionel Trilling's famous description, both the old intelligentsia and the new knowledge class constitute an "adversary culture." Both are also parasitical upon the enormous material success of the industrial capitalism whose values they decry—a success which has meant that fewer and fewer people are needed to keep the basic productive machinery of society going, and that society can consequently afford a plethora of goods and services which previously would have seemed unnecessary or frivolous.

Among such services (some incorporated into the apparatus of the welfare state, others offered on the free market) are new bodies of knowledge to be taught from kindergarten through graduate school and in adult-education classes; all the streams of communication released by the media; therapies for every conceivable human predicament; and similarly knowledge-driven means to enhance the "quality of life," "social justice," "interpersonal sensitivity," and the like.

Those who proposed that the group providing these services constituted a New Class could base themselves on the evident fact that its members tended to share both vested interests and certain values which, in the aggregate, looked very much like a class culture. And this culture, by its own self-definition, was indeed antagonistic to the old bourgeois culture; it was, precisely, a *counter*-culture.

INTERESTINGLY enough, the proponents of what was somewhat grandiloquently called "New Class theory" twenty years ago spanned the political spectrum. There was a right-wing and a left-wing version of the theory. The right-wing version, exemplified most notably by the writings of Irving Kristol, viewed the New Class as a danger to the health of the society; the left-wing version, expressed by Alvin Gouldner, among others, looked on it as the last best hope for a radical reconstruction of America.

Both agreed on the empirical basis of their fears or hopes—that is, they agreed that there *was* such a thing as this New Class. They also agreed that the New Class was inimical to capitalism, and they looked upon the relation between the old bourgeoisie and the New Class (itself a product of the bourgeoisie) as a sort of class struggle, animated not only by a conflict of values but by contrary vested interests. The New Class tended to the Left, not only because of its adversary values, but because, much more so than the old bourgeoisie, it was dependent on government employment and tax-funded subsidies.

For a while there was a flurry of debate around the notion of the New Class. Some sociologists denied that this group could be called a "class," others questioned the cohesion of its culture or the Left-tending quality of its politics. But even as the sociologists were denying or ignoring the reality of the new knowledge class, it was taking over American society.

"Taking over" may be too strong a term. Still, a close look at the social and cultural changes that have occurred in the United States since the early 1970's reveals that virtually every one of them has enhanced the values, the status, and the power of people based in what both Kristol and Gouldner called the New Class.

In one important point, though, the New Class theorists were, if not altogether wrong, somewhat off-target. The Left-leaning politics of the knowledge class have been considerably moderated, moving from radical Marxist enthusiasms to a muted social democracy. None of the dominant New Class ideologies today—environmentalism, feminism, gay liberation, multiculturalism—is primarily anti-capitalist.

Moreover, Kristol *et al.* were mistaken in seeing a great class struggle in the making. To be sure, the New Class and the business class had conflicting interests, and they still do. But a large measure of accommodation, mutual cooperation, and even symbiosis has also come about. The knowledge class has largely given up its revolutionary fervor and operates willingly within the existing economic and political structures. In return, the business community has opened itself up to many of the values and mores of the adversary culture. And both groups have found ways of making money out of the new culture.

Put simply, the counterculture has with astonishing ease become a cultural establishment, essentially at peace with the structure of capitalism. One could look upon this as proof of the impressive adaptive capacity of advanced capitalism, or alternatively as proof of the impressive stupidity of most capitalists. In either case, symbiosis rather than class struggle is what marks the status of the post-Woodstock culture today.

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IN THIS perspective, the recent triumphs of the anti-smoking campaign are anything but accidental in their timing. For whatever else the Clinton administration may be, it embodies the most decisive coming to power of the new knowledge class. It is not, as conventional commentary has it, that the "baby boomers" have now reached the presidency. It is one particular segment of that generation which has reached the top, not the generation as a whole (many of whom, depending on income level, are newly unemployed middle-aged business executives or equally aging drug dealers employed printing license plates).

Hence the cleansing of the White House from the evil of tobacco smoke expresses in a most appropriate manner the relation of the anti-smoking movement to the rise of the new knowledge class. Indeed, virtually the entire domestic agenda of the Clinton administration expresses the culture and the interests of this class. (And, not so incidentally, the administration's confusion in foreign policy reflects the inability of the same class to adjust its earlier pacifism and anti-anti-Communism to the realities of the post-cold-war era.) It is in this light that one can understand the priority of health reform in the Clinton legislative program: the Clinton health plan represents the most ambitious power grab yet in the short history of this rising class.

It is equally appropriate that the EPA should have spearheaded the new government role in the anti-smoking campaign. This, after all, is the agency that made the spotted owl a new national symbol and whose wetlands regulations add up to one of the most massive assaults on property rights since the invention of zoning.

But now a whole array of federal agencies is getting into the act. Picture Robert Reich, as Secretary of Labor in command of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, stepping up to a podium and calmly announcing regulations that would, by administrative fiat, prohibit smoking in virtually every nonresidential building in the United States.

Picture, too, David Kessler, head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), telling a congressional hearing that cigarettes are addictive and then plaintively asking for legislation that would allow the FDA to stop just short of banning them. (Apparently even some of the most fervent anti-smoking activists are not eager to add tobacco to the list of substances targeted in the fabulously successful "war against drugs.") Kessler ought to consult with Clinton's Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, who apparently wants simultaneously to decriminalize marijuana and to criminalize tobacco. (The travel industry may take note. Americans have been traveling to Amsterdam to smoke a joint; they will soon have to travel to Mexico City to smoke a cigarette.)

But the prize for potent symbolism to date must go to the recent congressional hearings conducted by Representative Henry Waxman, Democrat of California, one of the most prominent anti-smoking enthusiasts on Capitol Hill. The setting was the usual locale for such hearings, which in its very physical structure is more appropriate to the court of an Oriental despot than to a democratic legislature—an amphitheater, with the legislators and their aides lounging comfortably in the upper rung and peering down on hapless witnesses who sit on straight chairs and have to look up at their political betters in every exchange.

In this instance, the chief executive officers of seven major tobacco companies were made to sit in the pit, supposedly to testify. They did not get much of a chance. With Waxman in the lead, the members of his committee harangued them, interrupted them, made them the objects of withering sarcasm. The climax of this parody of legislative investigation was the appearance of an asthmatic child, eleven years old or so, who lectured the stony-faced executives on the evils of tobacco.

With this kind of thing going on, no wonder those furtive smokers never fight back.

III

IT IS too early to tell whether the current explosion of anti-smoking activity by government on all levels will lead to the total victory of which the movement has been dreaming for twenty years. But what makes the whole story so alarming is that the success already achieved by the movement is paradigmatic of a much larger series of victories by the protagonists of the new culture. America is indeed being transformed, institution by institution, into a society that makes a mockery of the values on which its democracy was originally founded.

The old American creed used to be expressed in the proposition (as it read in the 1950's) that every individual had rights "irrespective of race, color, creed, or national origin." Other collective ascriptions were then added to this affirmation of individual autonomy vis-à-vis the community—gender, sexual orientation, age, physical condition. But then, at first imperceptibly, every one of these collective identifications was reified and the formula was turned on its head. Now it is the collective entity—gender, race, ethnic group, and so on—that has rights, *irrespective of the rights of the individual.* Individual rights must be subordinated to the collective good. And this collective good is ever more amply defined, with the definition increasingly codified in law and then backed up with the awesome power of modern government.

Within the dynamics of American politics, the Democratic party has become the main force in

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this transformation. One might expect that the Republicans, self-styled defenders of traditional American values and individual rights, would mount a principled resistance. This expectation would be misplaced. Here and there, on some items of the New Class agenda, Republicans have resisted some of the more outrageous assaults. On the whole, however, they have assented to the basic presuppositions of the agenda—on race, on gender, on the environment, and so on—complaining mainly about the economic costs of these programs of social engineering.

Contrary, then, to the complaints of communitarians like Robert Bellah, it is not "community" that is now under assault among us, but rather the rights and even the idea of the sovereign individual.

Theoretically, there are at least two explanations of this new twist. The first, already suggested in the preceding discussion of New Class theory, is that a profound cultural change has been occurring in this society. The second would be more revisionist, raising the question of whether the individualistic character of American society was exaggerated to begin with.

Not that there can be any doubt that, from early on, a strong tradition of individual autonomy has existed in America, expressed in folklore and literature, in everyday patterns of interaction ("it's a free country!"), and of course in political institutions and law. Perhaps this individualism, if compared with other Western cultures, could reasonably be described as "rugged." However, American individualism, possibly also from early on, has been in tension with something very different—with, precisely, a profoundly "communitarian" and *ipso facto* conformist streak in the culture.

One sees it everywhere. Americans have always been joiners as much as individualists. While American ideology and law have accorded protected status, even admiration, for the dissenter, in ordinary American life there have always been strong pressures toward conformity. Americans, more than other Westerners, have been prone to hysterical campaigns of moral mobilization. American adolescence, as shown in study after study, has been a veritable pressure cooker of conformity.

David Riesman tried to get at this dialectic between individualism and conformism in his classic *The Lonely Crowd*. His categories of "inner-directed" and "other-directed," applicable to value systems as well as to personality types, quite aptly captured the tension. Riesman did not think that the "other-directed" tendency was there from the beginning, but that in this century it had been superseding the older, more individualistic one. Whether or not he was right about the history, it is clear that, at least today, the depiction of American society as overly individualistic is a gross distortion. This is not a nation of rugged individualists, but of timid joiners, petulant victims, and self-denigrating conformists. Under a continuing rhetoric of individual autonomy and rights, an insidious collectivism is becoming the new norm.

To anyone driven to ask one last question about those furtive smokers in the snow—can these people be *Americans*?—the answer, alas, is that they provide a frighteningly accurate picture of what this country has already become and an even more frightening harbinger of its future.

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It's Big Government, Stupid

David Frum

JOURNALISTS who covered Patrick J. Buchanan's abortive 1992 presidential campaign heard some remarkably stinging invective from him about the crushing burden of Big Government. When pressed for details, however, Buchanan could bring himself to name only three specific civilian budget cuts. He would repeal half the 1990 congressional pay raise, eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts, and end all foreign-aid programs—for a grand-total savings of some $13.2 billion. Yet in the 1992 fiscal year, the United States government spent nearly $1.5 trillion, an amount equal to the entire gross domestic product of united Germany. From that vast ocean of money, fed by roaring rivers of unnecessary and destructive spending, greasy with floating blobs of waste, the man who regards himself as the most fearless conservative in America would blot up rather less than 1 percent.

However marginal some of Buchanan's views may be, his timidity in the face of Big Government is all too typical of American conservatives, including even Ronald Reagan. Reagan owed his 1980 presidential victory to what seemed at the time an inspired political stroke. There would be no more threats to throw widows out into the snow, no more Taft- and Goldwater-style calls for self-reliance, cheese-paring, and pay-as-you-go, no more flinty frugality. Rather than fight and lose the battle over the welfare state for the hundredth time, Reagan would change the subject from spending to taxes. Later, after the tax cuts had worked their supply-side magic in the form of increased revenue, there would be plenty of time to start chopping away at the excesses of Big Government.

And indeed, federal revenues did shoot upward in the booming 80's—even revenues from the personal income-tax cut, just as the supply-siders had predicted. Unfortunately, federal spending swelled even faster. Conservatives would later pin the blame for this spending binge on a hostile Democratic Congress. But a quick flip through the pages of the budget documents of the decade shows that spending grew fastest for Republican constituencies: pensioners, farmers, and veterans. In the end, Reagan's two administrations piled up more debt, in inflation-adjusted dollars, than Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman had incurred to win World War II. Then, in the following four years, George Bush accumulated three times more debt (again adjusting for inflation) than Woodrow Wilson had taken on to fight World War I.

CONCEIVABLY, the failure of the Reagan gambit might have persuaded conservatives—in government and out—to redouble their zeal for scaling back the functions of the state. But that is not what happened. Most people on the Right accepted the view that anything Reagan had left undone simply could not be done.

Thus, in the spring of 1992, *Policy Review* sent a questionnaire to twenty moderate-to-conservative Senators. What would you do, the magazine asked, to cut $25 billion from the budget? The real news was not that only five bothered to answer, or that only one of the five, the Colorado Republican Hank Brown, had any useful suggestions to offer. The real news was that *Policy Review*, the organ of the Heritage Foundation, the intellectual armory of Reaganism, thought that $25 billion—or less than 2 percent of federal expenditure—was as ambitious a spending-cut target as it could realistically set.

Whatever they might say in their after-dinner speeches or in their op-ed pieces, conservatives had effectively thrown in the towel on government spending. As Heritage despairingly wondered, in the briefing book it compiled for the new Bush administration in 1989: "If Ronald Reagan and his 'Reaganauts' could only *slow down* the growth of government spending, not reverse it or eliminate wasteful programs, what hope is there for any other conservative President. . . ?" Understandably, post-Reagan conservatives have been greatly tempted to stop thinking about shrinking government, and to look for a new and less frustrating message.

The message they have found is summed up in the phrase, "the culture." As the always quotable

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Buchanan wrote in defense of his controversial speech to the 1992 Republican convention in Houston: "We cannot raise the white flag in the culture war, for that is a war about who we are. Nor can conservatives become conscientious objectors—because culture shapes politics, culture is the Ho Chi Minh trail to power. Surrender this province, and we lose America."

Precisely what is meant by "the culture" has always been more than a little unclear. Some conservatives, like Hilton Kramer and Samuel Lipman of the *New Criterion*, use the term to encompass arts and letters, the sciences, and intellectual life generally, all of which, they fear, are being politicized and degraded. Other conservatives, like Midge Decter and William J. Bennett, appear principally to be talking about morality—and in particular, the attitude of the mass media, the entertainment industry, and the nation's religious, political, and intellectual leaders toward morality. Still other conservatives use the term to mean the civilization created on this continent by European immigrants—a civilization they see as threatened by the assaults of multiculturalism.

The problem is that a politics of opposition to cultural decay in any or all of these senses cannot work as a substitute for a politics of opposition to Big Government. For perhaps the most important force driving the social trends that offend conservatives, from family breakup to unassimilated immigration, is the welfare function of modern government. The nearly $1 trillion the federal government spends each year on social services and income maintenance—and the additional hundreds of billions spent by the states—is a colossal lure tempting citizens to reckless behavior. Remove those heaps of money, and the penalties would again deter almost everyone from personal misconduct, as they did before the welfare state was set up in 1933, and as they even continued to a lesser extent to do before its huge expansion in 1965.

The great, overwhelming fact of a capitalist economy is risk. Everyone is at constant risk of losing his job, or having his business destroyed by a competitor, or seeing his investment portfolio crash. Risk makes people circumspect. It disciplines them and teaches them self-control. Government subsidy, by contrast, does for many who are not rich what her millions did for the late socialite Barbara Hutton—it enables them to engage in destructive behavior without immediately suffering the consequences.

Twenty years ago, an economist named Sam Peltzman noticed that drivers who wore seat belts, while suffering far fewer accidents than drivers who did not, inflicted far more. The welfare state functions as a political safety belt, reducing the riskiness of all of our lives; and, just as with real safety belts, there are what Peltzman called "feedback effects" from our newfound sense of personal security. Some of these effects are undoubtedly good. Unemployment insurance, by easing fears of job loss, does seem to relax workers' anxieties about technological change. Other effects are not so good.

Consider the example of what ranks in conservative thinking as perhaps the most corrupted institution in American society: the university. Suppose that there were no student loans, and very little general state aid to higher education; imagine that every student (save those who could win a scholarship from the university itself) were paying the full cost of his own tuition and that the university had no sources of income other than tuition, alumni and corporate gifts, endowment income, and grants from government exclusively for specific research projects. In such a world, the universities would not look at all like the schools that now enrage conservative critics of American higher education.

Forced to spend their own money, the less motivated students, or those seeking only (as one conservative academic once put it) to prove the negative point that they were not so idle and incompetent as to fail to get a B.A., would drop away. The students who remained, paying $1,000 or more per course, would become discriminating consumers. Some demand for film studies, black studies, gay studies, and courses on the novels of Louis L'Amour would linger on—but in a cash-on-the-barrelhead university, the demand for them would be much less.

So, pretty quickly, would the supply. How and why the likes of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Frantz Fanon have come to loom so large in American higher education is a big and vexing question. But at least part of the answer is that American universities teach what they do for the same reason Polish factories under Communism used to turn out pairs of boots with two left feet: the factories made what pleased them; and because the consumers were paying with soft currency, they took whatever it pleased the factories to make. With consumers—i.e., students—paying real money—i.e., their own—the universities would no longer be able to get away as easily with teaching useless or politicized junk.

Nobody can promise that the end of state aid to universities would chasten them immediately. Organizations like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations could still channel billions to the universities' most destructive personalities and functions. It would take a generation, possibly more, for the pranksters and sophists in the academy to retire. But surely if large-scale state aid to higher education had never been tried, the universities would be more wholesome places from the conservative point of view today, and if massive aid ended tomorrow, they would tend over time to become more wholesome.

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Furthermore, with greater sacrifices demanded of the families of those seeking higher education, the proportion of Americans going on to college would shrink. That in turn would mean that state governments could no longer count on the colleges to remedy the deficiencies of the high schools. America turns out students the way General Motors once turned out cars: slovenly workers on the line count on a highly paid team of fixers at the end of the line to redo and repair their bungled labors. If there were fewer fixers, the schools would have to be run like a Toyota line instead: the job would have to be done right the first time.

SIMILAR "feedback effects" drive the crisis of family breakdown. Welfare can never be reformed in a way that simultaneously encourages people to work and provides them with a decent livelihood if they do not. I am not suggesting—not very confidently anyway—that abolishing welfare would undo the harm the program has done. It is quite possible that this trap cannot be escaped through the same route by which it was entered. But if welfare had never been expanded in the middle 1960's, if a sixteen-year-old who got pregnant in 1994 had the same unpleasant options her counterpart did in 1964—beg her furious parents for help, drop out of school and take a job, or somehow persuade the father to marry her and take a job himself—is it not probable that she would be as unlikely to give birth out of wedlock as her 1964 predecessor was?

Of course the world—or "the culture"—in which the teenager of 1994 lives is not so hostile to illegitimacy as the world in which her grandmother lived. But if the culture that abhorred illegitimacy has vanished, perhaps it has done so because it is hard for most people to believe for very long in the wrongness of something that the government rewards. The English jurist James Fitzjames Stephen observed 130 years ago that while it is true that most people refrain from stealing because they believe stealing to be wrong, and not because they fear hanging, it is also true that the reason most people believe stealing to be wrong is that thieves are hanged.

It really should not surprise anyone that the welfare state has weakened family structures. That was what the welfare state's social programs were meant to do. The family used to be connected by its members' mutual responsibility for child-rearing, unemployment, sickness, old age, disability, and burial. But while strict mutual responsibility did a fair job of deterring illegitimacy and abandonment, it never succeeded very well in coping with illegitimacy and abandonment once they occurred. The welfare state was designed to replace and improve upon those old family functions. It thus reduced the economic importance of the family—which, predictably, weakened the family's stability.

To be sure, there is little clamor for going back to the old ways. Social Security is more reliable, more generous, more efficient, and less intrusive than one's children; and from the child's point of view, even a 15.3-percent payroll tax is a lot less trouble than having to look after a bedridden old mother in the spare room. Certainly, it is more agreeable to slice "duty" out of the lexicon, to visit one's aged parents knowing that it is someone else's job to provide for them, or to drop one's children off at a day-care center instead of begging a favor from one's sister or mother.

Hence, it is not very realistic of conservatives to expect that the pre-welfare-state family can survive in a welfare-state world. Hence, too, the conservative search for (in Bennett's words) "economic and social policies that support the two-parent family" is bound to be disappointed. "Supporting the family" in Washington parlance is code for subsidies and welfare programs like family leave and day care. But these are the very forces in modern life that strike at the family's core economic logic, the sexual division of labor, leaving only affection to hold families together—and affection is not always a trustworthy glue.

Through yet another "feedback effect," the welfare state is also heavily responsible for the balkanization of American society that so worries conservatives. Henry George compared the act of raising a single tariff to hurling a single banana into a cage of monkeys: all the unlucky monkeys shriek and rage until bananas are thrown to them, too. So long as society keeps hurling economic and psychic rewards at everyone who claims victimhood, it is futile for conservatives to demand that America's warring ethnic, religious, racial, and even sexual minority groups stop their complaining and concentrate instead on what unites them as Americans. If billions of dollars can be extracted by any group that can represent itself as piteous enough, political entrepreneurs will play on their followers' grievances, mobilizing their resentments, intensifying their group identity, and whipping up suspicion of outsiders.

CONSERVATIVES who wish to direct their full attention to "the culture" say that they are attempting to preserve bourgeois values. But they are unlikely to succeed in a world arranged in such a way as to render those virtues at best unnecessary and at worst active nuisances.

What are the bourgeois virtues anyway? The paramount ones are thrift, diligence, prudence, sobriety, fidelity, and orderliness. Compared to the military, saintly, and romantic virtues—zeal, courage, passion, love of beauty, pride, and indifference to worldly goods—it is not a very poetic list. But the prosaic bourgeois virtues are the virtues that settled America (combined, of course, with a canny eye for the quick buck),

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and they developed into a national norm because they were essential to survival in a country that was, until the 1930's, simultaneously rich in opportunities and full of terrible dangers from which there was scant protection except for one's own resources and the help of friends and family.

The opportunities remain, but the dangers have dwindled. Why be thrifty any longer when your old age and health care are provided for, no matter how profligate you may be in your youth? Why be prudent when the state ensures your bank deposits, replaces your flooded-out house, buys all the wheat you can grow? Why be diligent when half your earnings are taken from you and given to the idle? Why be sober when the government runs clinics to cure you of your drug habit as soon as it no longer amuses you? Why be faithful when there are no consequences to leaving your family in search of newer and more exciting pleasures?

True, some virtues linger on after they have outlived their usefulness. True, too, the bourgeois virtues retain much of their usefulness when combined with talent. If diligence can earn you $150,000 a year as an engineer, you will be diligent, even if President Clinton helps himself to half the proceeds. If your mental life is interesting to you even when you are cold sober, those taxpayer-funded clinics will not beckon. But for the less capable and the less resourceful, who always outnumber the more, things look rather different.

If the old American culture and the old American character were rational responses to the riskiness of life, one cannot radically reduce that riskiness and expect the old culture and the old character to persist. The children of a self-made man are different from their father: more optimistic, often more generous, more sensitive, and more tolerant, but less careful, less provident, less hardworking, less self-controlled. In the same way, the citizens of a socially insured America naturally act and think differently from the citizens of a self-reliant America.

CONSERVATIVES, who prefer the older character, are fooling themselves in thinking that it can be rebuilt without returning to the older way of life that brought such a character into being. But they are also fooling themselves in thinking that Reagan defined the limits of any conceivable shrinkage of the redistributive and regulating functions of the American government.

The welfare state that conservatives are frightened to fight is a desperately unstable institution. Its costs rise without respite because it tempts people into ever-greater helplessness and dependence on it. The faster its costs rise, the more the economy that supports the welfare state stagnates, in large part because of the disincentives created by the high taxes it requires, but also because its temptations sap the brutal acquisitive drive that propels economies forward.

Thus, as the government sectors of the world's two dozen welfare states have swelled, their budget deficits have soared, their growth rates have slowed, their unemployment rates have risen, and their poor have behaved in increasingly pathological ways. Comparatively speaking, the trend by which spending outruns resources has not yet gone very far in the United States—only 14 percent of federal revenues are now spent to pay interest on the federal debt, while neighboring Canada pays 35 percent—but the proportion is climbing.

As it does, terrible resentment will be ignited. If taxpayers now think that they send money to Washington and get little in return, wait until one dollar in six or one dollar in five vanishes right off the top to the federal government's creditors. Pressed by taxes, angered by the declining quality of public services, feeling cheated by government and not knowing why, the voters sink deeper and deeper into the mistrustful mood that characterized the electorate in 1992, when almost one voter in five cast a ballot for the most sinister demagogue to seek the presidency since Huey Long was cut down in 1935.

Some conservatives take comfort in the welfare state's travails, assuming that the edifice will collapse by itself. Irving Kristol says that we are living through the "end-game" of the welfare state. The editors of the *Wall Street Journal* cite polls in which a clear majority of Americans claim that they would prefer to receive fewer services from the government and pay less in taxes than receive more and pay more. Republican Congressman Newt Gingrich's theory is that within the next half-dozen years, the number of people who understand that they are never going to get their money's worth out of Social Security will for the first time outnumber those for whom the system is a net benefit: the baby boomers will realize that Social Security is a bad deal and will rebel against it. But the ricketiness of the welfare state does not embolden Gingrich to vote against it. Precisely the opposite: it excuses him from doing much of anything while waiting for the inevitable end.

NOTHING, however, is inevitable and very few things are even predictable. And even if the welfare state does collapse, it is not preordained that a more enterprising, self-reliant, and virtuous society will emerge from the rubble. For as the United States keeps its commitments to the old with ever-heavier impositions on the young; as it tends the sick with invisible taxes on the healthy; as it hastens the promotion in the labor force of blacks and Hispanics with laws that penalize whites and Asians; as it supports the poor in ways that abuse the neighborhoods and schools

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that formerly belonged to the middle class—as it does all this, a lot of free-floating intergroup animosity will be released into the atmosphere. Animosity is always someone's opportunity. In 1992 Patrick Buchanan hoped it would be his; he happened to be wrong, but next time he, or someone like him, may come a little closer to being right.

Anticipating this dangerous outcome, conservatives should be acting now to avoid it, by doing what the conservatives of the 1950's did—discarding all consideration of what the public at the moment wants to hear, and trying to prepare its mind to respond intelligently to the crisis ahead.

Such a course of action may demand perhaps too much of Republican politicians, but conservative intellectuals are another matter. They should be at work on something a little more ambitious than the Republican party's next campaign manifesto. They should be showing the public the necessary connection between the social pathologies it loathes and fears and the social programs it still rather likes—and not just the programs for the poor that have created the underclass, but also the broader policies and laws that have corroded the economic functions of the family, set ethnic groups at one another's throats in pursuit of set-asides and special favors, outlawed the expression of moral outrage at irregular conduct, and diminished the necessity of thrift.

Conservatism was never supposed to be a sunny political ideology or an easy sell. It was always a doctrine for the tough-minded. But the Reagan interlude turned conservative heads. It misled conservatives into thinking that most Americans were with them—not just casually or accidentally, but fundamentally, even when conservative ideology might deny them some benefit out of the Treasury or morally condemn something it would give them pleasure to do. And as conservatives have discovered the uncomfortable fact that the people are not really with them—not at the moment, at least—they have tried to adapt to the popular will, sacrificing in the process their old hostility to Big Government.

Twelve years of twisting and struggling to escape this trap have just entangled conservatives ever more deeply in it. Is there a way out? Only one: conservative intellectuals will have to care less about the immediate electoral prospects of the Republican party and more about telling unpalatable truths—in the hope of making those truths prevail to the point of becoming the conventional political wisdom of the future.

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Land for No Peace

Douglas J. Feith

THE Israel-PLO accord was supposed to bring on the new dawn of peace that optimists contended could be Israel's for the asking. Many Israelis, fatigued by decades of securing the land and themselves against Arab threats, military and terrorist, had come to regard the status quo as unbearable. Perhaps, they speculated, Palestinian-Arab leadership had evolved away from ideological anti-Zionism toward a pragmatic willingness to share the land with the Jewish state in peace. After the Soviet Union's collapse and the American-led attack on Iraq, Israel's strategic strength and Yasir Arafat's political and economic weakness combined to make Israeli officials think they could test that hopeful proposition without undue risk.

The accord comprised, first, the Declaration of Principles (DOP), which was concluded on August 20, 1993 and signed by Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the White House on September 13, 1993; and, second, the mutual-recognition agreement embodied in the letters dated September 9, 1993 exchanged by Arafat, Rabin, and the Norwegian Foreign Minister. No one can doubt that these agreements are significant; but what exactly do they signify?

The DOP provides for the withdrawal of Israel's military forces from Gaza and Jericho and the transfer of governing authority for "education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism" to an Arab Council "empowered to legislate." The DOP is often called the Gaza-Jericho accord, but this is misleading because the transfers of *governing* authority are not limited to Gaza and Jericho. On the contrary: the Council's jurisdiction will cover "the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, whose integrity will be preserved during the interim period"—i.e., "a transitional period not exceeding five years."

The Council, to be established following general elections, will assume the responsibilities Israel is relinquishing, but in the meantime authority rests with the PLO. "Palestinians of Jerusalem who live there will have the right to participate in the election process [for the Council]," and Jerusalem is one of the "issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations."

Such Israeli concessions went far beyond the West Bank-Gaza Strip autonomy provisions of the 1978 Camp David accord signed by Israel's Menachem Begin and Egypt's Anwar Sadat. That accord designated the autonomy authority as an "administrative council" and withheld from it all legislative or proto-parliamentary powers. At Camp David, the Israeli government took care to specify that the aim was "to provide full autonomy *to the inhabitants*" (emphasis added) rather than to the territories as such, let alone to all "the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit." Begin considered this distinction between autonomy for the inhabitants and autonomy for the territories important to prevent prejudicing the issue of Israel's right to assert claims regarding the territories in the final status negotiations. Israel did not, at Camp David, accept the PLO as an interlocutor. And it refused to make Jerusalem a topic for negotiation at any time.

Placing the 1978 accord side by side with the 1993 DOP highlights the historic and unprecedented nature of Israel's concessions in the latter agreement.

WHAT of the PLO's concessions? The Arafat-Rabin agreements were not the first time the PLO chairman had acknowledged Israel's right to exist, declared the PLO's acceptance of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and promised to renounce anti-Israel terrorism. Arafat did all of that in December 1988 to win the PLO its official, open dialogue with the U.S. government. (Eighteen months later, Arafat's unwillingness to repudiate a PLO terrorist attack compelled the Bush administration to terminate the dialogue.)

Nor was this the first time the PLO had announced that it would consent to accepting authority in whatever portion of the territories became available to it. The Palestine National Council originally did that in the summer of 1974, when it formally resolved to combine diplomacy with armed struggle. In what came to be known

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as the "phased plan," the PLO leadership agreed that its principles were not offended by the dismantlement of Israel in stages and through diplomacy, rather than all at once and solely by military means.

Wherein, then, lay the much-heralded "breakthrough to peace" on Arafat's side? In the view of those who perceived one, the breakthrough was that this time Arafat actually meant what he said. (One Israeli official was quoted to the effect that quarrels within the PLO over Arafat's peace pledges were a sign that the pledges were not tactical but reflected a deep ideological change.) Skeptics were referred to the fact that Arafat's promises were now formulated explicitly (as if an explicit statement cannot be false). Also, those promises now included an unambiguous commitment to delete provisions in the Palestinian Covenant rejecting Israel's right to exist. Furthermore, Arafat had formally agreed, directly with the Israeli government, to an autonomy timetable that was supposed to defer for years into the future any demand for Arab sovereignty in the territories. And finally, not only would the PLO's own anti-Israel violence end, but Arafat would cooperate in keeping Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other overt rejectionists in check.

None of these PLO promises was kept.

To begin with, the PLO did not amend its Covenant. Though accepted by Israel as leader of the organization deemed "representative of the Palestinian people," Arafat proved unable to command the requisite endorsement of his leadership from the Palestine National Council, the body empowered to amend the Covenant, or even from many of the top officials of his own Fatah faction of the PLO. After a number of his top PLO colleagues resigned or otherwise protested the Israel-PLO agreements, Arafat dropped whatever plans he had to propose amendment of the Covenant.

Secondly, in violation of its agreement to defer the demand for sovereignty, the PLO insisted upon immediate moves toward that goal. Thus, throughout the negotiations that produced the May 4 agreement on implementing the DOP, Arafat pressed for an expansive definition of "Jericho" (far broader than the bounds of the town itself), exclusive PLO control over border crossings, immediate removal of Jewish settlements, and implicit endorsement of PLO claims to Jerusalem.

Thirdly, in the months after the DOP was signed, there was intensified violence by Arabs against Jews, some of it perpetrated by Arafat's own Fatah faction. Nor did the PLO crack down on Hamas and other non-PLO extremists. In fact, open collusion among them was evident, including the publication of joint declarations, participation in demonstrations together, PLO demands for the release of arrested Hamas personnel, and announcement of new PLO-Hamas understandings on cooperation to remove Israel from the territories. Though Palestinian-Arab terrorism had plagued the land for nearly a century, every new attack now evoked defensive explanations that the actual target was the "peace process." (This led one Israeli wit to call for an end to the peace process so that he could get some peace.)

ISRAELI government officials voiced frustration over this state of affairs, but they took pains not to sound accusatory. Shortly before the DOP was signed, Yossi Beilin, Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, declared, "If there are problems on the way to implementing the agreement and if they cannot control their opposition and there is no order, we will say we can't go on." This reassuring theme was stressed repeatedly before the signing ceremony. On August 31, the *Washington Post* reported: "Peres told the [Israeli] parliament that Israel will not recognize the PLO unless it removes from its charter a call for armed struggle against Israel and halts violent attacks on Israeli targets." The next day, the *Wall Street Journal* reported:

> Mr. Beilin . . . also said that the [DOP plan] is conditional on the Palestinians being able to prevent Islamic fundamentalist groups who oppose the peace talks from carrying out terrorist attacks against Israel. . . .
>
> Mr. Beilin . . . said that a key part of the "Gaza and Jericho first" plan is the fact that it is reversible.
>
> Mr. Beilin continued, "As in any other agreement, there is the belief that both sides will be able to implement it and can be trusted, but if there is a clear violation, it will be more than understandable that we cannot adhere to it."

Nevertheless, when the PLO failed to control its opposition (and even its own elements), when there was terrorism and no order, and when the PLO otherwise violated the DOP and the mutal-recognition agreement, the Israeli government did not say, "We can't go on."

On September 13, the very day the DOP was signed, Jordanian television aired a speech by Arafat which, among other offensive features, explained his peace policy by reference to the phased plan:

> O my beloved ones: do not forget that our Palestine National Council made the decision in 1974. It called for the establishment of national authority on any part of Palestinian soil that is liberated or from which the Israelis withdraw. It is the fruit of your struggle, sacrifices, and jihad. . . .
>
> Brothers, beloved ones: Palestine is only a stone's throw away for a small Palestinian boy or girl. It is the Palestinian state that lives deep in our heart. Its flag will fly over the walls of Jerusalem, the churches of Jerusalem, and the mosques of Jerusalem.

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They see the day indeed as a far-off event, but we see it quite near and we indeed are truthful.

This extraordinary statement was tantamount to Arafat's concluding his White House speech with a loud and jeering "I take it back!" The Israeli government took it in stride, however, as it did the PLO's subsequent failure to amend the Covenant. Israel exerted itself to lure the PLO back to the table when the PLO walked away. Israel urged its U.S. supporters *not* to link PLO promises—for example, on the Covenant issue—to any waiver of various anti-PLO provisions of U.S. law. And Israel restrained itself and its U.S. supporters from pressing for a U.S. veto of the UN Security Council resolution condemning the massacre of Muslims by a Jew in Hebron, even though the resolution referred prejudicially to the territories as "Palestinian" land and designated Jerusalem "occupied territory."

In light of the history of PLO terrorism and untruthfulness, and of Israeli defense-mindedness and distrust, it was stunning—one might even say disorienting—to see Israeli officials soliciting European and American financial support for the PLO, gesturing good will through the release of hundreds of suspected Palestinian-Arab terrorists, and muting their own and their public's outrage over continuing anti-Israel terrorism by the PLO. Students of military history are familiar with the fog-of-war phenomenon. Students of the Arab-Israeli conflict have, since September 13, 1993, come to know the fog of peace.

WHAT kind of strategy or rationale or theory underlies such a policy? The usual answer is Land for Peace. But this longstanding concept has in important respects been transcended or shunted aside by the Israel-PLO accord and the implementation talks.

Israelis who view territorial withdrawal as the key to resolving the conflict between themselves and the Palestinian Arabs have generally done so on pragmatic grounds. The contention has been not so much that Israel lacks rights in the territories as that their retention, given the over-1.5-million Arab inhabitants, would swamp the Jewish state demographically. The classic formulation has been that holding on to the territories will ultimately destroy either the Jewish nature of the state, if the Arabs are given Israeli citizenship, or its democratic character, if they are not. Exponents of this view, most notably the present Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, consistently maintained, however, that they would be willing to relinquish the militarily valuable territories to an Arab power only in return for peace and security.

There was always, I submit, a contradiction inherent in the demographic-bomb theory. If the Arab powers refused to grant Israel peace and security, would a proponent of that theory favor retaining the territory even though doing so would be suicidal, in that it would destroy either Israel's Jewish or its democratic nature? Clearly, underlying this position has always been a rationale not for trading territory for peace, but for unilateral withdrawal by Israel. The theory in effect tells Israel's enemies that they need not pay a price for the territories because Israel will either destroy itself by sitting tight, or up and leave for its own reasons, without demanding much (or perhaps anything) in return.

In the past, this contradiction was effectively finessed by the contention that the Palestinian Arabs (perhaps in confederation with Jordan) were in fact willing to offer Israel a secure peace if only the Israeli government, as a matter of policy, would agree to trade territory for it. Essential to a Land-for-Peace policy was a sequence of steps (and the order was important). First, Israel would renounce permanent control of the land, declaring its readiness to trade land for peace. Second, Israel's Arab interlocutors would make a credible and authoritative pledge of peace. And third, with this reliable peace promise in hand, Israel would effect the agreed-upon withdrawal.

This, in essence, was the policy the new Rabin government adopted when it came to office in 1992. In the so-called Madrid Process, the Rabin government, unlike its predecessor, made clear that it was willing to relinquish territory in return for peace. But after a year, the talks had produced no peace agreements. There was stalemate on all fronts. Mutual recriminations were rife. Anti-Israel violence was claiming numerous victims and provoking Israel into large-scale retaliations, such as the expulsion of 400 accused fundamentalist terrorists to Southern Lebanon in December 1992 and Operation Accountability in July 1993, which forced thousands of Arabs in Lebanon to evacuate their homes. Around the world, journalists and officials criticized these Israeli actions.

A Land-for-Peace policy had not produced the anticipated softening of Arab negotiating demands, and Israeli officials spoke with exasperation of their unhappiness that the Arabs refused to meet them halfway in the Washington talks.

If the Israeli government continued to insist on a credible and authoritative pledge of peace as a *precondition* of withdrawal, the prospect loomed that it would not be able, within its four-year term of office, to deliver to its citizens a new peace agreement or deliver them from the travails of the occupation. So the traditional idea of Land for Peace was set aside, and Israel concluded the deal embodied in the DOP.

It is noteworthy that the DOP was agreed upon and published by the Israeli government *before* the PLO and Israel had concluded the mutual-recognition agreement by which Arafat promised to respect Israel's right to exist; to renounce, prevent, and punish anti-Israel terrorism and violence; and to detoxify, as it were, the Palestinian

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Covenant. On September 1—that is, after the DOP was published but before the mutual-recognition agreement was achieved—Peres announced that Israel intended to implement the Declaration even if the PLO failed to make the peace pledges required for Israeli recognition: "[The Declaration] stands on its own legs. It doesn't need any further confirmation." The next day the *New York Times* reported: "Israeli officials say that if the two sides cannot agree on terms of mutal recognition in the near future, Israel would be ready to sign the accord anyway."

In other words, policy had evolved to the point where Israel was intent on beginning to withdraw from at least some of the territory *whether or not* it received a specific, authoritative promise of peace from the Arab side.

The deal, then, falls outside the traditional concept of Land for Peace. It treats Israeli withdrawals not as the reward, after the fact, for a clear-cut, credible, duly formalized, pacific change of heart on the part of an Arab interlocutor, as was the case with Anwar Sadat. Rather, Israel is to withdraw in the hope that this will encourage such a change of heart and, if no such change occurs, then so be it.

THOUGH the case for unilateral withdrawal by Israel—now sometimes described euphemistically as a "divorce" from the territories—has greater internal consistency than the traditional Land-for-Peace idea, it puts Israel on a perilous course leading to grave disappointment and worse.

The traditional Land-for-Peace approach entailed danger for Israel because the land in question could serve as a staging area for terrorism, military attacks, or both, and because the promises given to Israel, even if sincere, would come from individuals who ruled undemocratically and could not commit their political successors. But the current approach of withdrawals-first-and-maybe-peace-later entails all these risks and more. For as the expression on Rabin's face made clear during the first famous handshake on the White House lawn, Israel can hardly take Arafat's credibility for granted. And even if it could, subsequent events have demonstrated that Arafat cannot win a reassuring margin of support for the deal from the PLO as a whole, or even from his own Fatah organization, let alone from the growing number of Palestinian Arabs who line up with Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other non-PLO rejectionist groups.

Some Israelis dismiss these considerations. They believe that, even if the withdrawals do not resolve or even mitigate the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel is better off confronting its future security problems without what they view as the encumbrance of the occupation. This is strongly implied when officials like Beilin refer to the territories as "a burden and a curse."

But unilateral withdrawal cannot produce the promised liberation from moral, military, or other problems. It will instead result in Israel's exchanging one set of problems for another. The material and moral burdens of the occupation—though not to be denied or belittled—are not a threat to Israel's existence. Neither, as 27 years of history attest, need they be fatal to Israel's democratic institutions or principles. They create strains, sometimes severe; but many democracies have suffered and survived strains from security threats, and Israel's commitment to a liberal rule of law remains robust.

On the other hand, territorial withdrawals that (1) reduce Israel's strategic depth; (2) deprive Israel of control over the Judean and Samarian highlands; (3) reduce Israel's time for mobilization in a crisis; (4) require greater reliance on preemption strategies; or (5) increase Israel's chances of being cut in half in a war will create problems of a far higher order. The often demoralizing psychological and economic burdens of the occupation will then be replaced by even more demoralizing psychological and economic burdens arising from physical insecurity and a hair-trigger national-defense posture.

It has been asserted that the Israel Defense Forces could easily handle any military threat Arafat and the PLO might pose from the territories. This is a reassurance that deserves to be credited—so long as current circumstances prevail. But if Islamic fundamentalist forces were to win additional political successes in countries like Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and among the Palestinian Arabs themselves—hardly an inconceivable eventuality—the ability of Israel's enemies to exploit any territorial concessions made now to the PLO would increase substantially.

THERE is yet another important issue in the negotiations: national rights.

In debates over national-security policy, it is always useful to remind oneself of what one is aiming to secure. For a country like the United States or Israel, national security is far more than simply the physical survival of the citizenry. America is more than a land and a people: it is a society based on a constitution; it is an idea. Israel too is an idea. It is the fulfillment of the Zionist dream, the embodiment of the internationally recognized national rights of the Jewish people.

When contemplating a proposed concession by Israel, it is not enough to ask whether that concession would endanger the state's physical security. It is altogether proper for Israelis to ask themselves also whether the concession involves an undue relinquishment of national rights. This point was underlined for me by the comment of an Israeli friend—a strong proponent, by the way, of the Israel-PLO accord. He said:

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I have great sympathy for those Jews who value Hebron and Nablus, who have intense Zionist feelings about them. I personally don't share those feelings for those places, but I do share them for Jerusalem. If the Arabs were to say, "You Jews can have peace but you must give up Jerusalem," I would say that I'd rather have Jerusalem. If it ever got to the point where I would rather have peace than Jerusalem, I would move to the United States.

A statement like this reminds us that there is more at stake in the negotiations than peace and the physical security of Israelis. One cannot define the national security of Israel without reference to the principles of Zionism, any more than one could define the national security of the United States without reference to the principles of the U.S. Constitution. Though it is common for nations to trade assets with one another for purposes of commerce or to solve quarrels, there are some things that a nation can never trade away unless it is willing to change its basic character. Nations that try to buy peace with aggressive neighbors by trading national rights often wind up with neither sovereignty nor peace.

MUCH is made of the fact that the Arab parties are for the first time willing to negotiate peace with Israel openly. That is something; but does it establish that the Arab intent is peaceable? After all, every ambitious and aggressive dictator for the last 100 years engaged in highly publicized peace talks: Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Slobodan Milosevic all participated in peace negotiations and used them to pursue belligerent designs.

Nor is there any guarantee that the follow-up negotiations will succeed in carrying the DOP into full effect. Notwithstanding the lengthy, complex, and bitterly negotiated May 4 implementation agreement, the overarching Israel-PLO accord of September 1993 could disintegrate, as have other diplomatic gossamers of the Middle East from the 1919 Feisal-Weizmann agreement to the 1983 Israel-Lebanon treaty.

Israeli withdrawal from the territories is beginning. Whether it can continue and to what extent are questions that hinge largely on Arafat's credibility and authority. Though the avant-garde of Israel's unilateral-withdrawal school may say to itself, "We will not let Arafat block our withdrawal, no matter what," the general Israeli public has been taught to expect reliable peace and security commitments in any trade for territory. It is crucial, then, that the PLO provide political cover: enough concessions from Arafat to give the appearance of mutuality; at a minimum, sufficient controls on political violence to allow Israeli forces to go on withdrawing from the territories without precipitating outbreaks of mayhem and killings; a decent interval. Yet the more influential the unilateral-withdrawal school has appeared to be in Israel, the less Arafat has been inclined to make any concessions at all. Indeed, for more than half a year after he signed the DOP, Arafat devoted himself to taking back important concessions—for example, by raising issues like the settlements and Jerusalem. Given Arafat's record, traits, and various incapacities (including his lack of authority over even his core constituency), there remains a substantial possibility that the negotiating dynamics will ultimately produce not a final settlement under the Israel-PLO deal, but an unraveling.

If this unraveling should occur, Israeli advocates of unilateral withdrawal will lose the valuable cover provided by the peace process, but they may—in the open, as it were—succeed in winning their essential point. Perhaps Israel will make further withdrawals and additional concessions even without credible and authoritative moves toward peace by Arafat and the PLO. If it does, its Arab enemies may take this as confirmation that unremitting hostility and violence, having driven the Jews from the territories, can also drive them the rest of the way out of Palestine. In much of the Arab world, the Crusader analogy—two centuries were required to wear down and expel the Crusaders from the Holy Land, and Arabs should be prepared to do the same with the Jews no matter how long it takes—is frequently invoked and is vivid and inspirational.

Israel may thus discover that the problem is not the intransigence or the flexibility of its own policies or the shape of its boundaries. Rather, the problem is whether its neighbors have the political leadership and the good will to sustain peace with a Jewish state on what, according to their religious and cultural convictions, is *their* land, *Arab* land—that is, anywhere in Palestine. If, contrary to all benevolent hopes, it transpires that those neighbors are not so willing, Israelis will have to tap into their Zionist heritage to find enough conviction and fortitude to defend themselves, for however long may be necessary, against hostility and violence, against *intifadas* and wars, if they are to preserve their state.

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Saul Bellow, Our Contemporary

Hilton Kramer

THE authors whose books we read when they are new and we are young are bound to occupy a place in our lives that is different from that of other writers. They are our contemporaries. The air they breathe is the same air that we breathe. The history they experience is our history, too, and if their "take" on it differs in some ways from our own, it is nonetheless the same history. We recognize the arguments, the atmosphere, the very texture of events as familiar territory, for the world that is evoked by these writers is in so many respects continuous with our own. The jokes do not have to be explained.

As we—and they—grow older, however, our relation to these writers undergoes a significant change. We come to expect both more and less from them—more, because of the congruence of our joint experience and the sense of identification it engenders; less, because of our growing sense that, like many things in life we did not fully understand when we were young, they will prove in time to be disappointing. It is then that doubt sets in and we come to see such writers as—well, as *writers*, to be judged on their merits like other writers, writers who have now slipped out of the enclosed circle of our experience to become public literary figures. We may still read such writers with keen interest, but we no longer grant them a special place in our lives.

FOR certain intellectuals of my generation—literary, Jewish, liberal (as we then were) but contemptuous of progressive causes, anti-Communist, skeptical of the academy, indifferent to mass culture, enchanted by the life of art and the life of the mind, yet gloomy about what the modern world held in store for us—Saul Bellow was one of the writers who instantly became part of our conversation with ourselves and with others. The anxieties and aspirations that his fiction expressed, like the breakdown and disarray it depicted and the disabused intelligence and humor it flaunted, had an immense personal appeal.

I missed *Dangling Man* (1944) when it was first published—I was still in high school, reading George Eliot, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the English Romantic poets for my classes, and novels from the Book-of-the-Month Club for myself—but as an undergraduate I read *The Victim* (1947) with a feeling of great excitement. I had just begun to read the modern classics, and did not doubt for a moment that the author of *The Victim*, who was about the age of my older brother, belonged in their company.

For some years thereafter I read every one of Bellow's subsequent novels as it came out. I gobbled up the advance sections of *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) as they appeared in magazines, and rejoiced in the success of the book when it was published. The criticisms that book met with—criticisms that I now think cogent and timely—I ascribed to the kind of family quarrels I was just then getting to be familiar with on the New York intellectual scene. Those criticisms did not, in any case, apply to *Seize the Day* (1956), which seemed to me to sum up something essential about the life of the time, the heartbreak side of life in the 50's.

I found *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) to be something of a detour, an anthropological romance in which the exuberant style that Bellow had forged for *Augie March* fought a losing battle against the abstract character of an arid allegory. *Herzog* (1964) was a triumph, however, a novel from which people I knew read out passages to their friends on the telephone. "Listen to this!" we would say, and recite one of Herzog's wise, crazy letters until we were both convulsed with laughter. (Does anyone do that with novels today?) It was a book that defined our world, and considering what it meant to us, it was a mercy, as Henry James might have said, that it was as good as it was.

Then came *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970). Nowadays we tend to forget what a bombshell it was—the first novel to give us a searing account of the moral collapse of the city (New York) and the class (the emancipated Jewish middle class) that were fundamental to our existence. It was also, among much else, a book about the failure of liberalism itself in the wake of the 60's rebellion, the sexual revolution, and the race war. It had taken the measure of the future of bourgeois urban life in America, and pronounced it doomed. A prophetic book, and still in my opinion the most courageous and sagacious of Bellow's novels.

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Mr. Sammler's Planet divided intellectual opinion, or confirmed the divisions that had already occurred as the result of the 60's uproar. In other words, it took a political stand. Historically, at least for certain intellectuals of my generation, it remains the most important of Bellow's novels. Coming at a moment when so much of the American literary world had joined the "movement," as 60's radicalism was then called, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* stood out as a high-style novel willing to tell the truth about the disasters that had already befallen us as a result of the emancipatory imperatives of that movement. In its refusal to conform to the left-wing pieties that had already swamped the academy, the media, and the whole cultural scene, it mocked what had swiftly become the conventional wisdom. Which, of course, was why the Left decried it. And why, perhaps, Bellow has never written anything like it again.

It was with *Humboldt's Gift*, published five years later, that I dropped out of the Bellow fan club. This had nothing to do with politics. I had had my own harrowing experiences with Delmore Schwartz, the poet upon whose ruined life the character of Von Humboldt Fleisher was based, and found that I distrusted the fable that Bellow attempted to make of that life. I could not read the novel as anything but an extended exercise in self-exoneration. It had its extraordinary moments, to be sure—bravura scenes in which Schwartz's zany, desperate brilliance was authentically conveyed, along with a vivid sense of the melancholy fate that awaited him (he died in a seedy hotel room after years of dissipation and mental illness)—but I could not abide the way the author had contrived to exempt himself from the moral indictments the book so freely brought against others, indeed against almost everyone.

I continued to read Bellow, but the spell was broken. His later books seemed so intent upon settling old scores and trying out new roles—some of them distinctly too metaphysical for my tastes—that I could no longer read them as autonomous literary works. It seemed to me that Bellow was more and more acquiring the smug and apodictic tone of a writer whose celebrity was now a refuge from experience and a barrier to any direct engagement with the world. His later books made this reader, anyway, long for one of Herzog's letters—irreverent, inspired, combative, and self-mocking—to cut through the fustian and recapture the old magic.

Now comes Bellow's first collection of nonfiction pieces—essays, lectures, interviews, eulogies, and so forth—called *It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future.** Exactly what it does add up to is something of a problem, but this is a book that certainly contains some wonderful things—what might even be called *Herzog*-type things.

There is, for example, the part of his Jefferson Lectures, delivered in 1977, in which Bellow offers his reflections on a little anthology called *The Bitch Goddess Success* (edited by Leslie Katz, 1968). Let me quote:

> I was saying that I had taken to reading daily in *The Bitch Goddess Success* because I found it full of helpful suggestions, mantras for meditation. [The composer] Mr. Charles Ives [1874-1954], for instance, in criticizing prize competitions in the arts, says that "a close union between spiritual life and the ordinary business of life is necessary" and that we must keep the balance between ordinary life and spiritual life. Well, this is of course the name of the game. But the maddening fact is that after you have said these obviously true things, you are up against it still. For when Mr. Ives, casting about for an example of the ordinary, says that "a month in the Kansas wheat fields may do more for a young composer than three years in Rome," you ask yourself when he himself last looked at ordinary life in Kansas. Again, he says: "If, for every thousand-dollar prize, a potato field be substituted, so that these candidates of Clio can dig a little in real life . . . art's air might be a little clearer." Then he checks himself slightly by quoting a French moralist: "*On ne donne rien si libéralement que ses conseils*" [One is never so generous as with advice]. But he has not checked himself in time. Digging potatoes? Kansas wheat fields? The last American artist to try those wheat fields was [the poet] Vachel Lindsay when he went forth to preach his Gospel of Beauty in the days before the First World War. The ordinary business of life in the United States and its great cities is what it is because out in Kansas they aren't bringing in the sheaves as they did in 1910.

Now, the rhetorical strategy deployed here may have lost some of its luster since it was first used by Bellow in *Herzog*, but it still holds up, and the point is well made. So are the points he scores against the animadversions of the architect Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), also represented in *The Bitch Goddess Success*, and these have the additional interest of being rooted in Bellow's—and Sullivan's—home ground in Chicago. Indeed, some of the best things in this lecture and the other pieces in *It All Adds Up* are Bellow's evocations of the Chicago he has known most of his life.

Yet there is something going on in his Jefferson Lectures, as there is in most of Bellow's later lectures, essays, and interviews, that remains unacknowledged—something offstage, so to speak, that sparks his indignation without ever being openly confronted and identified. After all, we are not interested in Charles Ives or Louis Sullivan because of their opinions about success. Certainly *The Bitch Goddess Success* is a silly little book, and while Bellow was right to mock it, his

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mockery would have been more persuasive if he had taken his audience into his confidence about the sources of the anger it provoked. (Anger, rarely acknowledged as such, is the pervasive emotion in these later pieces.)

THE Jefferson Lectures were delivered a year after Bellow was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, and he was clearly still smarting over the fact that, as he tells us, "A kind friend, worried about my soul," had sent him that silly book—a gesture clearly regarded as an act of rebuke, which it may well have been. This sets Bellow off on a little tirade about what he dubs the "Goddess of Rebukes." "There was a Goddess of Rebukes, who worked in the shadows behind the Goddess of Success," he writes. "Less prominent, she was perhaps more powerful and enduring. . . . Make no mistake about it: the Rebuke Goddess is stronger than the Bitch Goddess." And further:

> Many of our intellectuals serve as priests of the Goddess of Rebuke, nagging, scolding, and infecting a vulnerable people with gnawing anxiety and remorse. In so doing *they* become successful. They can claim that they do not serve the Bitch Goddess. Personally immune to her, they merely refer to her for purposes of rebuke. This was why my considerate friend sent me the handsomely printed little anthology.

Alas, this sounds less like the sardonic comedy of Herzog than like the rage of Von Humboldt Fleisher, which has been (albeit circumspectly) appropriated for a public occasion.

The fact is, moreover, that Bellow is himself no slouch when it comes to serving as a priest of the Goddess of Rebuke, as many of the pages in *It All Adds Up* eloquently attest. Did the editors and writers who produced *Partisan Review* in the late 30's and early 40's welcome the young Saul Bellow into their circle and help launch his literary career? Yes, indeed, but now the Nobel laureate, secure—or rather, insecure—in his success, feels compelled to treat them with withering condescension.

"Some of the editors," he writes of *Partisan Review*, "had the mentality of Sixth Avenue cigar store proprietors" who just happened to be adept at "importing good things." "Where else," he adds, "would you find Malraux, Silone, Koestler, and Company but in *Partisan Review*?" While acknowledging that the *PR* circle "then had considerable influence with me," he nonetheless still insists in a 1990 interview that "I was never institutionally connected with any of these people."

He also claims that he was a lot smarter about the fallacies of Marxism than the *Partisan Review* crowd, though he seems to have kept remarkably quiet about it at the time. And his novels have remained fairly quiet about the whole subject of Jewish radicalism, too. "I knew all about Lenin and Trotsky," he says of his boyhood, and tells the following story:

> I remember as quite a small kid being in the street with my father. We met a young man called Lyova walking down the street. Lyova told my father he was going back to Russia. Lyova's father was our Hebrew teacher, and his mother, Mary, a fat lady with a huge hat, was my mother's friend. My father said, "That's a foolish thing you are doing. Don't go." He was counseling Lyova not to go, but Lyova must have had some kind of politics. He couldn't have been older than eighteen or nineteen. But things like that happened every day. Lyova went back and vanished.

Lyova and his generation and their progeny vanished from Bellow's fiction as well, except as background and atmosphere. The American novelist who was better equipped than any other to write the moral history of Lyova's intellectual generation in America could not bring himself to create a novel about the subject he still cannot stop talking about in his 1990-91 interviews. It is only one of the losses we are reminded of in the pages of *It All Adds Up*.

ANOTHER is what it has cost Bellow—and us, too, his readers—for him to have become so fixated in recent years on what he calls (after Wyndham Lewis) "the moronic inferno." This miasma of a degraded popular culture, made worse by the media functionaries who serve as its henchmen and beneficiaries, is certainly a subject that cries out for critical analysis and condemnation, and Bellow is undoubtedly correct in describing it—as he did in the Romanes Lecture he delivered at Oxford University in 1990—as "a mental and emotional counterpart to revolution and world crisis, that is probably a by-product of nihilism." Yet it trivializes this huge and malevolent phenomenon to reduce it, as Bellow does again and again in his recent utterances, to the level of a "distraction" that impedes the progress of serious writers like himself and deprives him of the readers he feels are rightly his.

"Writers, poets, painters, musicians, philosophers, political thinkers, to name only a few of the categories affected," Bellow writes, "must woo their readers, viewers, listeners, from distraction." One knows what he means, of course, but it is nonetheless an odd complaint from a writer who now commands a large public. It is the kind of complaint that had a certain cogency when it was made decades ago by Delmore Schwartz in his essays on "The Isolation of Modern Poetry" (1941) and "The Vocation of the Poet in the Modern World" (1951), for Schwartz was lamenting the fate of a literary enterprise that had no hope of winning anything but a minuscule public and a difficult living. But for a Nobel laureate with a huge and admiring public the world over

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to persist in this complaint in the 1990's smacks, at the least, of a certain disingenuousness.

For the truth is that while the "moronic inferno" has certainly gotten a lot bigger and a lot worse since Delmore Schwartz's day, the status of writers like Bellow—rich, famous, and adored, and showered with literary honors, academic distinctions, and commercial opportunities—has not become endangered. The Romanes Lecture was not, after all, delivered at some obscure provincial seminary.

THIS is not to say, however, that Bellow does not have real enemies in high places. As I have already indicated, the literary Left long ago inscribed his name on its roster of reputations to be demolished. And from its own political perspective, the Left was right to do so, since virtually everything Bellow has written—or said—is infused by a spirit that is best described as disabused liberalism: a liberalism, now almost extinct, that has stripped itself of precisely the kind of political cant and ideological subterfuge that is still the Left's principal stock-in-trade.

Does this mean, then, that Bellow is some kind of neoconservative? He has repeatedly made a point of refusing to be labeled as such, and whether his insistence in this matter derives from real conviction or is merely a strategy of self-protection, I think he has to be taken at his word. Between the disabused liberalism that Bellow clings to and the neoconservatism he spurns, the political space may be difficult at times to discern; but it is nonetheless real, if only because it remains a place of intellectual refuge for that dwindling remnant of homeless liberals who identify their survival with a refusal of affiliation.

That this has now become an illusory position, however, based on a distinction without a difference, has been made plain to Bellow—and to the rest of us—by the hits he has lately taken in the public press. For their effect on Bellow's standing as a writer, these attacks are far more important than the "distractions" caused by the "moronic inferno," and are not to be confused with them. They represent the kind of political warfare from which no writer in the public eye can now find refuge, and it is part of one's disappointment with Bellow these days that even in the face of these attacks—which are on much more than himself—he seems, whether for reasons of vanity, fatigue, or disgust, unwilling to respond with the full weight of his intellectual gifts. Which means, in practice, that he has ceded the advantage to his adversaries, and left his natural allies to shift for themselves.

The first of the recent blows was struck in the *New York Times* by Brent Staples, a young black journalist who now occupies a highly visible position on that paper's editorial board. Staples has lately established something of a reputation at the *Times* as a militant advocate of political correctness, particularly on the subject of race. (The *New Republic* has dubbed him the paper's "political corrector.") He has even called for the abolition of the term "political correctness"—not, however, because of any disapproval of the thing itself, but in the interests of establishing PC prohibitions as an accepted norm in public speech.

To judge from what he has lately written about Bellow and about the very different work of Eugene Richards, a photographer who has made a career of documenting the wretched lives of the American underclass, Staples would seem to believe, and have us believe, that any unflattering depiction of blacks, either in words or pictures, is incontrovertibly racist if its author is white. In today's incendiary atmosphere, where PC prohibitions and self-censorship have indeed become the norm in the media, the academy, and the culture at large, this is the kind of charge that has the power to incinerate reputations, no matter how exalted, overnight.

Thus, when, in December, the *Times* in its Sunday *Magazine* featured the chapter called "Mr. Bellow's Planet" from Staples's new memoir, *Parallel Time*, and then, a few weeks later, published a promotional review of the book itself on the front page of the paper's *Book Review*, it had the intended effect of branding Bellow a racist. Staples had been a graduate student at the University of Chicago when Bellow taught there. Though never Bellow's student, he had developed a kind of paranoid fixation on the novelist—an obsession compounded of curiosity, envy, anger, and a remarkable ignorance of the art of fiction. *Humboldt's Gift*, which was published while Staples was a student at the university, "was one of the first novels I'd read on my own," as he writes in *Parallel Time*, and he read it strictly as a guidebook to what he calls "local geography, people included." What sparked his anger was the way the character Rinaldo, an underworld type, talks about blacks in the book. Rinaldo's views, like those of the leading character in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, are taken by Staples to be nothing but a personal editorial statement by Bellow, and hence an expression of racism.

At no point does Staples seem to have noticed that the white characters in Bellow's novels—and most particularly the Jewish characters, who are far more abundant than blacks—are frequently characterized in even more unflattering terms. Staples reads fiction the way the old literary commissars used to read fiction—and everything else, for that matter—rendering judgments purely on the basis of party-line politics (in this case, of course, racial politics rather than the politics of class).

At the same time, Staples is not above making some politically inspired characterizations of his own, and of an especially nasty sort. His descrip-

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tion of the sociologist Edward Shils, another member of the Chicago faculty he did not study with and whose books, as he himself admits, he could not fathom, is amazingly repulsive. And when, after stalking Bellow for months around the campus, he catches up with him on a crowded street, this is the way Staples depicts him: "He moved through the crowd looking downward, hungrily scanning asses, hips, and crotches. . . . The rest of us were a junkyard where he foraged for parts." It seems that once your subject has been branded a racist, everything is permitted.

THEN in March came the literary critic Alfred Kazin's ruminations on Jews—Bellow among them—in a piece called, in fact, "Jews," in the *New Yorker*. For half a century now, Kazin has made a specialty of instructing Jewish intellectuals in America on the correct way to conduct themselves as Jews. I am surprised that some enterprising publisher has not commissioned him to write a book of etiquette on the subject, for it seems to have absorbed him deeply for a long time.

For Kazin, one of the pitfalls of being an educated Jew is the sin of urbane manners. That was, astonishingly enough, the charge he brought against the late Lionel Trilling in *New York Jew* (1978), and he is still advising Jews to avoid a similar fate. But for Kazin the foremost test of authentic Jewishness, especially for descendants of immigrants, has to do not with manners but with politics: under no circumstances must their politics be anything but liberal or radical. In Kazin's moral cosmology, a special kind of damnation awaits any Jewish intellectual who strays from the orthodoxies of the Left-liberal mentality. And if, like Bellow, they happen to be writers, it is a bad sign, too, if they fall into the trap of becoming that hateful phenomenon, "a university intellectual." Worst of all, however, is for such Jews to adopt conservative views. This earns them instant and irreversible opprobrium.

Bellow was indicted in Kazin's latest piece on all these counts, to which was added, in keeping with the politically-correct character of contemporary liberalism, an implied charge of racism: The trouble, Kazin writes,

> is that Bellow is also a university intellectual, loves being in a university, and has moved in the company of the conservative Big Thinkers at the University of Chicago. He has been much involved with the traditionalists Allan Bloom and Edward Shils. Shils even read one of his novels in manuscript. [Heinous charge!] The University of Chicago thrives on absolutes, no doubt because its professors, especially Bellow, think of the city as the last word in philistinism.

This last criticism—about Chicago—is, of course, the sheerest nonsense, and there are many pages in *It All Adds Up*, as well as in Bellow's novels, that poignantly refute it. But reality does not count for much in Kazin's guide to politically-correct conduct for Jewish intellectuals. He goes on: "At [a] party, Bellow gave me a turn. I knew that, like many Jewish intellectuals from the immigrant working class who were forced to their knees before the altar of Marxism during the Depression, he had been moving Right." And then comes the zinger, which adds racism to apostasy. "My heart sank," Kazin writes, "when I heard that Bellow once said, 'Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus? The Proust of the Papuans? I'd be glad to read him.' "

And then, after all this, Kazin pretends to wonder at what he calls "Bellow's vehemence about liberals"!

ALAS, *my* heart sank when I read Bellow's rather feeble response to these assaults in the op-ed piece he wrote for the *New York Times* shortly thereafter. In that piece he speaks of coming "under attack in the press and elsewhere for a remark I was alleged to have made about the Zulus and the Papuans," and insists that "Nowhere in print, under my name, is there a single reference to Papuans or Zulus." And then he goes on to defend the remark he has denied having made by explaining that he "was speaking on the distinction between literate and preliterate societies."

This is such a transparent cop-out—such an egregious attempt to by-pass the explosive subject of multiculturalism—that one feels embarrassed on his behalf. Bellow is right, very right, in saying that "Righteousness and rage threaten the independence of our souls." He is right, too, to warn that "We can't open our mouths without being denounced as racists, misogynists, suprematists, imperialists or racists." And he is right again to declare that "As for the media, they stand ready to trash anyone so designated." Yet in his answer to his attackers, he never really engages the central charge that Brent Staples and Alfred Kazin have brought against him, which has little, if anything, to do with distinctions between literate and preliterate societies.

Obviously Bellow is still enough of a liberal, however disabused, to be fearful of the ultimate cultural ostracism that awaits any writer today, no matter how famous, who goes into battle against the radicalization of our culture. In this respect, sadly, he remains very much our contemporary.

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Why the Dietary Laws?

Leon R. Kass

A CORE document of Western civilization, the Torah or Pentateuch has at its center a set of dietary regulations, presented in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus. Though these now strike even many Jewish believers as quaint, and though the tradition (especially among Christians) now regards them as much less important than the so-called ethical teachings of the Bible (for example, the Decalogue), the Bible itself makes no such distinction. At the very least, we risk ignorance of our own Judeo-Christian tradition if we do not try to understand even these seemingly irrational rules of eating and their place in the way of life set forth by the Bible.

But understanding the dietary laws may yield more than cultural self-knowledge. Indeed, I believe that they embody and reflect a more or less true understanding not only of the problematic character of eating but, more significantly, of the nature of nature and of the place of man within the whole. They implicitly pay homage to the articulated order of the world and the dignity of life and living form; they incorporate into the act of eating an acknowledgment of the problematic character of eating as a threat to order, life, and form; and they celebrate, in gratitude and reverence, the mysterious source of the articulated world and its generous hospitality in providing food, both for life and for thought.

These remarkable customs not only restrain and thwart the bad; they also commemorate the true and beckon to the good. Finally, the dietary laws of Leviticus commemorate the creation and the Creator and beckon us toward holiness.

I

IF THE dietary laws are to remind us of the creation, we need first to remember some things about it, as it is presented in the first chapter of Genesis. Here we are given, through a sequential unfolding, *our* world hierarchically arranged, in an account which, carefully read, can be made to reveal also the rational principles embodied in it.*

Let us first remember the order of the creatures. Day one: light and the separation of light and dark. Day two: heaven, a dividing vault which separates the waters above from the waters below, opening up room beneath which life can move. Day three: first, the gathering of the waters to reveal the dry land, i.e., the separation of earth and seas; and second, the earth's putting forth of vegetation after its kind.

The next three days bring creatures that all have locomotion, beginning with the heavenly lights on day four. Day five brings the fish and fowl, each after their kind. Day six: first, the land animals, after their kind; second, man, created in the image of God. The second three days thus closely parallel the first, bringing (respectively) motion, life, and the possibility of freedom and creativity to the realm of light, to sea and sky, and finally to the earth.

Then there is, either completing or transcending the creation, a seventh day on which God desists from creating. Three blessings are also given: the fish and fowl for fecundity ("Be fruitful and multiply," 1:22); man for fecundity and rule over other living things ("Have dominion," 1:28); and the seventh day itself, not only blessed but separated, hallowed, i.e., made holy (2:3). Three blessings: life, rule, holiness, or as scholars might say, the natural, the political, the sacred—an ascending order that is imitated in the Torah's unfolding account of human life.

The main principles at work in the creation are place, separation, motion, and life, but especially separation and motion. Places are necessary regions for the lodging of separated kinds and backgrounds for the detection of their motion; life may be looked at—at least on a first glance, which I shall later correct—as a higher and more independent kind of motion. Further, if one treats locomotion as a more advanced kind of separation, in which a distinct being already

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*For a much more thorough treatment and defense of this account of our world, see my "Evolution and the Bible: Genesis 1 Revisited," COMMENTARY, November 1988.

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separated from others also separates itself from place, we could say that *the* fundamental principle through which the world is created is *separation.* Creation is the bringing of order out of chaos by acts of separation, division, distinction.

This view is encouraged by the language of the text: the word "divide" or "separate" (*badal*) occurs explicitly five times in the first chapter, and the idea is implicitly present ten more times in the expression "after its kind," which implies the separation of plants and animals into distinct and separable kinds.

THE creation of living things on days five and six completes the work of creation. Living things are higher than the heavenly bodies by virtue of having greater freedom of motion, man most of all. They are characterized also by having a proper place—in the waters, above the earth before the firmament, or on the earth; by being formed according to their kinds; by having motion appropriate to their place (more free on land); and by reproducing themselves, according to their kinds. Unlike the heavenly lights, they also have powers of awareness—especially hearing—which are implied in the receipt of God's blessing; they can recognize the distinctions that are manifest in the world, and ultimately, at least one of them—man—can understand those conveyed in speech. Finally, they are characterized by vulnerability, which may be what makes them in need of God's blessing.

The vulnerability or neediness of life, not a prominent theme, is in fact not forgotten. The very last subject of the first chapter, before God's pronouncement that everything is very good, is the matter of food. After blessing man to be fruitful and multiply (as He also did the fish and fowl) and to have dominion over all life, God teaches man that dominion over the animals does not mean appropriation or exploitation, at least not as food:

> And God said: "Behold I have provided you with all seed-bearing plants which are on the face of all the earth, and every tree which has seed-bearing fruit; to you I have given it as food. And to every living being of the earth and to everything that creepeth upon the earth which has a living soul in it, I have given every green herb as food." And it was so.

The only instruction given to man, the ruler, created in the image of God, is about necessity, about food—his and that of his subjects. Though they are to eat different things—seeds and fruit for man; green herbs for all other animals (yes, including the lion and the tiger)—they are all to be what we call vegetarian.

Keeping to this diet would disturb the order of creation almost not at all. Eating seeds and fruits does not harm the parent plants; eating fruit and discarding the seeds does not even interfere with the next generation. And the green herbs to be eaten by the animals are constantly produced by the earth, almost as a head produces hair. The disruptions caused by meeting necessity through eating would, in the idealized case, be negligible.

We must, however, imagine that man and the animals as created were *capable* of eating meat. True, they were encouraged not to do so, especially as the fruits of the earth were said to be bountiful. But that they needed to be told what to eat is perhaps a sign that, left to their own devices, their appetites might have extended to incorporate one another.

In this very subtle way, the text hints that the harmonious and ordered whole contains within it a principle—life or, if you will, appetite, and eventually omnivorousness and freedom—that threatens its preservation as an ordered whole. The biblical account speaks truly: life is destabilizing and threatens itself; man does so in spades. Despite (because of?) being created in the image of God, man alone among the creatures—except for heaven—is not said to be good.

The sequel indicates that life's destructive power is not an idle concern.

II

BEGINNING in the garden of Eden, the problem of eating and its regulation—barely hinted at in Genesis 1—receives prominent attention. The Bible seems to agree with Aristotle, among others, that the first reason for dietary laws is the need to restrain, moderate, and define the naturally unrestrained, immoderate, and boundless appetites of human beings—appetites that are by no means restricted to the desires for food, but for which the problem of eating is somehow emblematic.

The need for dietary laws is, to start with, identical to the need for law in general, and laws to regulate conduct are very often heralded by or presented in terms of regulations of eating. Indeed, the Torah presents us with a series of stages in the development of the human race, leading up to the formation of the people of Israel, each of which is marked by a change in the diet, usually involving restriction.

For example, at the beginning, in the bountiful garden of Eden, man was a fruit eater, allowed to eat of every tree of the garden—save one. Though the tree of knowledge of good and bad may be only metaphorically a tree—knowledge does not grow on trees—the image suggests an explicit connection between human autonomy and human omnivorousness, by representing the limit on the former in terms of a limit on the latter.

The expulsion from the garden is coupled with a shift from fruit to bread, *the* distinctly human

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food, and marks the next major step toward humanization through civilization. Men turn from gathering naturally available food (fruits) to toilsome cultivation of grain, itself in need of artful transformation before it becomes edible as bread.

But civilization here proceeds in the absence of law. Men are left to their own devices and, beginning with the fratricide of Cain, the whole earth soon becomes corrupt and violent—including also the animals (6:12), by which we may understand that they have become carnivorous. By the tenth generation, men are disordering and dissolving the created order, with no respect for life and limb. The return through the Flood to the watery chaos of the beginning completes the dissolution into chaos that life itself has wrought.

The next and crucial stage, just after the Flood, is marked by the first law for all mankind and the first covenant between God and man, through Noah. To use non-biblical language, man here emerges from what Rousseau would later call the state of nature and becomes civilized or political, in "the moment when, right taking the place of violence, nature was subjected to law." The first statute of the first law sanctions for the first time man's eating of all animal flesh, but, at the same time, prohibits the eating of blood, which is the life.

Why does this move to law come about? An answer is suggested by the episode that immediately precedes the covenant. Noah, immediately upon leaving the ark, builds an altar and (presumably in an act of thanksgiving, but without command or instruction) sacrifices some of the animals God had him rescue from the antediluvian world of violence and bloodshed. God, in reaction to Noah's sacrifice, remarks, one imagines sadly, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (8:21). Even Noah, righteous and simple Noah, is not pure at heart and has a taste for blood.

God decides against blotting out and starting over; it would not do any good. Instead He chooses the way of law. The covenant with Noah makes a concession to man's violence and carnivorousness, but only by bringing it somewhat under law.

In becoming a creature under law, quasi-"political," man is decisively separated from his animal friends and relations, in the interests of elementary decency and justice in human life. For the Noachic law also for the first time prohibits murder and compels human beings to punish it. We surmise that God was willing to tolerate meat-eating in the hope that man's ferocity would thereby be sated, that murder might become less likely if human blood-lust could be satisfied by meat.

But the laws governing diet do more than restrain human omnivorousness and ferocity. Well before Leviticus, Genesis already hints that dietary laws are not merely ethical or, in the broad sense, political, designed to moderate human appetites that men may live more justly with one another. It shows us that dietary laws are also meant to help distinguish one people from another. Peoples are distinguished most decisively by what it is they look up to and revere, by their gods. And their view of the divine and their experience of the divine are often reflected or embedded in their customs and laws.

As practiced, laws bind a people to a particular and distinctive way. But as objects also of reflection, they may serve as symbols and reminders—in the highest instance, of the divine and our relation to it. Genesis gives us a dietary model.

The specifically Jewish dietary laws are anticipated in the story of Jacob's wrestling with the mysterious being which later traditions call an angel (Genesis 32:25-33). As a result of this striving with God, Jacob acquires the name which becomes the name of his people, Israel, but he is also marked with a limp in his thigh. The narrator interrupts his story of the wrestling to announce the first specifically Jewish dietary law: "Therefore the children of Israel"—this is the Torah's first mention of the name of the future people—"eat not the sinew of the thigh which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, even in the sinew of the thigh."

The children of Israel *remember*, by a dietary practice, that ambiguous and mysterious encounter of their father Jacob with the divine. They are restrained in eating, as was Jacob by the limp, but in a way that reminds of God. They remember, negatively, that Jacob was injured in the process of struggling against God; positively, that God was close enough to be encountered and struggled with.

THE basic anthropological sequence, then, as taught in Genesis, is this:

1. A pre-human condition (garden of Eden): men eat fruit.

2. A pre-political condition, before law (from Cain to the Flood): men eat bread, but they lapse naturally also into eating meat.

3. A political condition, beginning with elementary justice (Noah) and continuing to the formation of separate peoples (descendants of Noah after Babel): men eat meat, but under law, respecting blood as life, and (later) different peoples presumably have different dietary practices, based on differing conventions.

4. A more-than-political condition, in which one people is brought beyond the just into some relation with the holy, eventually to aspire to holiness itself. In this condition there are further

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restrictions of diet, connected with purity and holiness, eventually to be built on the distinction between clean and unclean.

After this brief review, we are now ready to ask about the particular laws in Leviticus that govern the eating of other living things.

III

WHY *these* dietary laws? Many people now seek to explain or rationalize the dietary laws of Leviticus in terms of concrete practical benefits that observance would yield to the Israelites—for example, in improved health. But attempts to explain the laws in terms of hygiene and public health cannot be supported by the text. Only a benighted Enlightenment reason, which holds cleanliness to be more important than godliness, could confidently imagine God as the forerunner of Louis Pasteur, threatening to cut men off from their people in order to keep them from trichinosis. As it happens, the law does not say that the pig or the eagle is unclean simply; it says it is unclean *to you*—though we shall see in a moment in what sense the pig is in fact itself a defiler.

Perhaps more plausible is the thesis that the laws intend to provide a discipline good for the soul, partly by the mere acts of self-denial, but mainly by the need to attend scrupulously to details of diet. But this explanation (or any other that alleges a different concrete benefit) cannot suffice, for it fails to account for the particularities of the prohibitions: why rule out the camel, the lobster, or the raven? Why permit the locust but not the ant?

There is much to be said for the view (favored by Maimonides among others) that the laws are meant solely to separate the children of Israel from other peoples, most especially from the Egyptians behind and the Canaanites before, peoples whose practices (especially in sexual matters) and pagan beliefs are from God's point of view abominable: whatever the Egyptians eat, let that be unclean to you, lest you stray easily into their ways.

But left at that point, this explanation does not go far enough. For the ways of the Egyptians and the Canaanites—indeed, the practices of any people—embody their beliefs about the world and especially about the divine, in this case a belief in nature gods. Thus, the avoidance of the abominable turns out to be the start of the turn toward holiness.

The context in which the dietary laws of Leviticus are given demonstrates that their concern is, indeed, with purity and holiness. The immediate antecedent is the problematic sacrifice of Nadab and Abihu, who "offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1)—just as the immediate antecedent to the Noachic law was the problematic, uninstructed massive sacrifice of animals by Noah immediately upon taking them from the ark. It is in the sequel to this wild, "Dionysiac" episode that God makes known the importance of two separations and of the connection between them: distinguishing the clean from the unclean and distinguishing the holy (*qodesh*, apart as sacred or holy, possessing an original idea of separation) from the profane (*hol*, common; from a root meaning to bore, to wound, to dissolve, to break—in short, to destroy wholeness and form).

God's first speech after this episode of the strange fire gives something of a dietary law to Aaron and the priests—no wine or strong drink before entering the sanctuary—and introduces us for the first time to the all-important and related distinctions, holy and common, unclean and clean, using the same verb, *lehavdil* (the root is *badal*), to separate or distinguish, which was so prominent in the first chapter of Genesis *and* which has not been used in this way since: "And that ye may make distinction between the holy and the common and between the unclean and the clean, and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the hand of Moses" (Leviticus 10:10-11). This is the context for the laws of purity which follow.

CHAPTER 11 is, in fact, only the first of several chapters that articulate the distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the common. Each deals with what might be described as "transgressions" of the natural boundaries between the human being and his surroundings. Chapter 11, food—that is, that which crosses the boundary coming from the outside in. Chapter 12, childbirth, and Chapter 15, bodily issues—things which cross the boundary going from the inside out, and, in the first and very special case, with the bodily separation of one life coming out from within another. In between, Chapters 13 and 14 deal with a disease that has been called (probably erroneously) "leprosy"; as described in the text, it is a disease of the living boundary itself, one which effaces the surfaces separating the inside from the outside and which erodes and alters the human form.

Thus, the laws that especially separate the Israelites from other nations, and that legislate the separation of clean and unclean, concern themselves with regulating "threats" to the embodiments of the principle of separation. The principle for separating clean and unclean is none other than separation itself. We cannot but think of the creation.

The principles important to Genesis 1—place; form or kind; motion; and life—are all at work in

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Leviticus 11.* The animals discussed are presented according to their place: first the land animals (vv. 2-8; also vv. 41-45), then those of the waters (vv. 9-12), finally the fliers, birds and insects (vv. 13-23). To be clean, land animals must have completely cloven hoofs and must chew the cud; animals that go upon the belly or upon all fours, that have many feet, that swarm upon the earth, or that do not chew the cud are unclean. To be clean, water animals need fins and scales. Among the fliers, we are given only a list of named unclean birds; but among the winged swarmers, i.e., insects, those that leap on jointed legs are clean, those that, though winged, walk on all fours are unclean.

Though I cannot account for all the details, I observe that the criteria used to identify the clean and the unclean refer to their *form*, their *means of motion*, and how they *sustain* life, that is, what they eat to live—specifically, whether they eat other animals or not. Ruled out are creatures that violate any of the principles of creation: place, form, motion, and especially the original dietary code, the one that would least disturb the created order. Ruled out are:

1. Creatures that have no proper or unambiguous place, e.g., the amphibians.

2. Creatures that have no proper form, especially the watery ones, (a) by virtue of having *indefinite* form, with fluid shapes, lacking a firm boundary defined, say, by scales—i.e., jellyfish or oysters; (b) having *deceptive* form, like eels (fish that do not look like fish); or (c) having *incomplete* form—like the incompletely cloven-footed animals.

3. Creatures that violate proper locomotion, such as those animals that live in the water but walk as on land (lobsters); those that live on land but swarm as in water ("all the swarmers that swarm on the earth"—in Genesis 1, the swarmers belonged in the waters); those insects that have wings for flying but that nevertheless go on all fours, i.e., walk (the insect leapers, though they have legs, are treated as more akin to the true fliers, and are clean); also, those with too many legs (centipedes) or no legs at all (that go on their belly, e.g., snakes, worms); and those that go on all fours, i.e., on their paws (and thus use their hands as feet).

4. Creatures that violate the original dietary code, showing no respect for life—that is, the carnivorous ones. This consideration is especially evident in the unclean birds, the identifiable ones being mainly birds of prey; and in the requirement of chewing the cud, the mark of the ruminant animals that eat what God originally gave all animals to eat, the green herb of the earth.

Let us consider more closely a few of the particular requirements. The clean and unclean land animals are distinguished according to their feet (parting the hoof) and according to their diet (chewing the cud), i.e., according to motion and eating. The fish are distinguished by their form (fins and scales) and their mode of locomotion (fins); the birds presumably by what they eat; the winged swarmers by how they move. How an animal moves reveals its relation to its place in the whole. What an animal eats reveals its relation to other parts of the whole. If they have fitting relations, they are clean.

Hoofed animals are grazing animals: their feet are fit only for walking and moving, not for grabbing and clawing; they are footed to stand in the world (and generally poised well above the ground, more erect than the carnivores), not to tear at it. Cud-chewers are so far from eating other animals that they finally chew and swallow only the homogenized stuff they have already once swallowed and raised. When the pig, a notorious omnivore, is declared unclean, the Torah says it is because "he does not chew the chew," using the cognate accusative construction (*vehu gerah lo yiggar*; 11:17), presenting by implication, as it were, the ideal of the perfect fit of activity and object. The pig is a would-be ruminant gone bad: one should chew not life but chew, i.e., that which is fit for chewing. The chew-chewers are poles apart from that first accursed and most unclean animal, the belly-crawling serpent, which is in fact a moving digestive tract and which "voraciously" swallows its prey whole and live.

By attending to these natural differences of animal form, the dietary laws of Leviticus refine and improve upon Noachic law. At first, in the covenant with Noah, all animals were given to all men as food, as a concession, save only the blood. Avoiding the eating of blood does indeed show some respect for the life that one is nevertheless violating. But the common principle of vitality—blood—itself ignores and homogenizes the distinctions among the *kinds* of animals. It shows respect for life, but not for separate living form. Focusing only on blood ignores especially the distinction between those animals that do and those that do not honor in their eating the original separations of the world.

The Levitical laws of purity reintroduce those

*The observations that follow agree largely with those of Mary Douglas ("The Abominations of Leviticus," in *Purity and Danger*, 1966) and Jean Soler ("The Dietary Prohibitions of the Hebrews," *New York Review of Books*, June 14, 1979), though they were arrived at independently and are made in a completely different spirit. These scholars are content to discover the patterns and logic of what Soler calls "the Hebrew mind." They do not consider the possibility that those patterns and that logic might reflect truly the intelligible patterns of the world, or that the insights of and about this people might have universal anthropological meaning. Support for such a view is given in my book, *The Hungry Soul*. See also Robert Alter's article on Douglas and Soler, "A New Theory of Kashrut," in COMMENTARY, August 1979.

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early distinctions: the children of Israel are not to incorporate animals that kill and incorporate other animals. This restriction tacitly acknowledges the problem of carnivorousness. The children of Israel are also not to incorporate or have contact with beings that do not honor in their motion the original separations of the world. These restrictions on their freedom, which rule out animals that take "illegitimate"—i.e., order-destroying—liberties, tacitly acknowledge the problem of freedom.

In all these ways, the dietary laws build into daily life constant concrete and incarnate reminders of the created order and its principles, and of the dangers that life—and especially man—pose to its preservation. In these restrictions on deformation and destruction, there is also celebration of creation.

In a certain sense, the dietary laws push the children of Israel back in the direction of the original "vegetarianism" of the pristine and innocent garden of Eden. Although not all flesh is forbidden, everything that is forbidden is flesh. Thus, any strict vegetarian, one could say, never violates the Jewish dietary laws. Yet though he does not violate them, one could not say that he follows them. For only unknowingly does he not violate them, and, more to the point, he refrains *indiscriminately*, that is, without regard to the distinctions among the kinds of living things that might and might not be edible. In this sense, the strict vegetarian, though he rejects the Noachic permission to eat meat, shares exactly the indiscriminate Noachic grouping-together of all the animals and its concentration only on the blood, which is the life.

But why, one might still ask, does not the Torah institute other dietary laws that push back all the way to vegetarianism, reversing altogether the Noachic permission to eat meat? Is not vegetarianism the biblical ideal, if the restricted meat diet of Leviticus is really nothing more than a compromise, a recognition that it is too much to expect these stiff-necked human beings to go back to nuts and berries? Perhaps we were wrong to see the Noachic dispensation as merely concessive, a yielding to Noah's (and mankind's) prideful bloody-mindedness. Perhaps, looking again, we can see here something elevating.

Noah, the incipiently civilized man, having spent time in close quarters with the animals, figured out as a result his human difference; he learned that he was more than just king of the animals. He learned that he was the ambiguous because godlike animal, both capable of and in need of self-restraint through the rule of law, and also open to the intelligible order of the multiform world. The result was the new world order after the Flood. To mark his self-conscious separation from the animals, man undertakes to eat them; to acknowledge his own godlikeness, man accepts the prohibition of homicide (Genesis 9:3-4, 9:6).

Eating meat may indeed be part and parcel—albeit a worrisome one—of our humanization. This humanization, it seems, can only be achieved at some cost to the harmony of the whole. The price is noted with regret, but it also must be paid. And it may be worth paying in order to keep the human being ever mindful of the forms and distinctions that are the foundation of the world. It might be superhuman or (as some would argue) more godlike for human beings to renounce their rational difference from the animals, and to affirm by an act of choice the prehuman, instinctive diet of fruit and seeds; but it also may be less than human. The Levitical dietary laws fit the human animal in his distinctive uprightness: celebrating the principle of rational separation, they celebrate not only man's share in rationality but also his openness to the mystery of intelligible yet embodied form.

But there is more to the dietary laws than the celebration of rational order. There is motion also toward the source of that order, toward that which is highest over all. The Noachic covenant with all flesh had denied in a way the dignity of flesh as variously formed and active, reserving it only for blood. Whether as a concession to unavoidable necessity or as a mark of human superiority, the lower (flesh) was permitted, but the higher (blood/life) was not. "Do not eat the high," says the Noachic law on meat. The Levitical permissions and prohibitions say the reverse: "Do not eat the detestable." The clean is to be incorporated. The legal distinction between clean and unclean is somehow higher than the natural principle of living and nonliving, even as it incorporates and modifies it.

There is elevation in these restrictions. The clean and the holy, once far removed, are incorporated into daily life. Eating the clean, under laws given by the Holy One, symbolizes the sanctification of eating.

IV

At the end of Leviticus 20, in an exhortation which concludes a long, ten-chapter section on personal, ritual, and moral purity, God speaks together of separation and holiness. He first calls on the children of Israel to keep and perform the laws, in order to avoid becoming abominations to the land and abhorrent to God, like the Canaanites whom He is casting out before them. He concludes as follows:

> I am the Lord your God, Who have separated (*hivdalti*) you from the peoples. You shall therefore separate (*vehivdaltem*) between the clean beasts and the unclean and between the unclean fowl and the clean; and you shall not

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> make your souls detestable by beast or by fowl or by anything wherewith the ground teemeth, which I separated (*hivdalti*) for you to hold unclean. And you shall be holy (*qedoshim*) unto Me; for I the Lord am holy (*qadosh*), and have separated (*va'avdil*) you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

How does making and observing separations between the clean and the unclean conduce to holiness? What does it mean, "Be ye holy, for I am holy"? I do not know. But I offer one observation and two suggestions.

The dietary laws remind us not only of the created *order* but of the order as *created*, not only of the intelligible separations and forms but of the mysterious source of form, separation, and intelligibility. The practice of the dietary laws reflects and achieves the separation of the people, around the rule of separation, to celebrate through obedience the holiness and separateness of the *source* of separation itself—and, by the way, also of the bounty of food.

And how might one become holier through observing these separations? Here are my two suggestions. On the one hand, through obedience: one reduces the distance between the holy and the profane by sanctifying the latter through obedience to the former. The low is made high—or at least higher—through acknowledgment of its dependence on the high; the high is "brought down," "democratized," and given concrete expression in the forms that govern ordinary daily life. The humdrum of existence and the passage of time are sanctified when the hallowed separateness of the Seventh Day is brought into human life and commemorated as the Sabbath. Likewise, the commonness of eating is sanctified through observance of divine commandments, whose main principles remind the mindful eaters of the supreme rule of the Holy One.

On the other hand, through imitation: God seems to say to the creature made in His image, "You should make distinctions because I make distinctions. Because I made the separations that created the world, because I also separated you from the peoples that know Me not that you should be Mine in holiness, so you must make and honor these separations in pursuit of holiness, of more perfect godlikeness." This suggests that it is also in the fullest rational activity that man imitates and comes closer to God—but with these most important qualifications:

We can discern the distinctions in things, but *we* have not made them separate.

Neither have we made that power of mind which registers the articulations of the world and permits us to recognize distinctions.

The rational man is therefore only an image—and knows it. Brought by his mindful appreciation of forms before the mystery of form and mind, he must bow his head—as he alone can—to powers greater than human reason. The upright animal, his gaze uplifted and his heart filled with wonder and awe, in fact stands tallest when he freely bows his head.

In order that we not forget these qualifications, the biblical dietary laws, like the creation they memorialize and like the world we inhabit, will never be wholly transparent to reason.

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Home Truths

Linda S. Lichter

WHENEVER preachers, politicians, or sitcom stars prattle on about "family values," I think of my great-grandmother's embroidered linens.

When I graduated from college in the late 1970's, an aunt bequeathed me a set of bed linens my great-grandmother had embroidered in the 1880's for her trousseau. I reacted with a mixture of disappointment and irritation at receiving such a useless relic. I shook my head in pity and disgust over all the hours she had wasted stitching those fussy monograms, flowers, and scrolls while waiting for Prince Charming. If I had to keep a memento of a woman I had never met, why did it have to be this impractical testament to her sentimental bondage? How I longed to possess her faded but proud college degree; of course she had none.

I put the linens in a closet and continued to sleep on unembroidered wrinkle-free sheets. But, to my surprise, those linens came to mind again years later, when I began hearing comments and stories that led me to rethink my assumptions about marriage and motherhood.

For example, a professional woman told me that she missed the comforting smell of the soup that her recently deceased mother used to make from scratch. Her mother's soup had made her feel special, because it could not be purchased or duplicated anywhere else. With no time to cook such intricate dishes, the woman lamented, "I have no smells to leave my children."

Another friend, who went from financial executive to stay-at-home mother, decided to make her daughter's first Halloween costume. She reasoned that "any idiot" could do it, including her mother, who sewed on a machine, and her grandmother, who sewed by hand. After spending more money on the fabric she proceeded to ruin than on the costume she was eventually forced to buy, she admitted that she now felt like an idiot in ways she "couldn't begin to define."

Then there is the woman who scolds herself for not being like her own mother, who had found time to put parsley on her children's dinner plates. She was delighted to see someone just like herself in a television commercial about a single, working mother whose young sons ask, "When's dinner?" In the commercial, the frazzled mom's answer is to eat at McDonald's, so that she can spend her limited free time with her kids, not in the kitchen. But when my friend attempted to follow this scenario, she found her local McDonald's packed with like-minded families whose "quality time" together consisted of shouting at one another over the general din. Not only did her dog eat better, she remarked, he ate out of a china bowl in more civilized surroundings. As for the parsley, she was certain "it meant something more than a small green sprig," but she could not define this something.

What can explain these sentimental yearnings for a half-remembered sense of "home," or the vague feeling that disappearing domestic frills and skills possess a meaning that transcends Halloween costumes and homemade soup? Once I might have written all this off as the *Leave It to Beaver* syndrome. But I now remember those embroidered linens of my great-grandmother, and the very real world that created them.

THAT lavishly embroidered world, which historians call the "cult of the home," was the one in which ordinary middle-class people lived during much of the 19th century. And as the traditional extended family gave way to the newer nuclear family, women took on the role of spiritual leaders in protecting the home from the corrupting influence of the modern world. Woman's mission was "heaven appointed," in the words of Catherine Beecher, the 19th-century educator who popularized the idea of motherhood as the spiritual anchor of the Victorian home.

This idea has been a prime target of feminists ever since Beecher's grandniece, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, called for dismantling the "sentimental" home, which she saw as a rhetorical ruse designed to keep women in their place. But the truth is that the Victorian home did provide a sanctuary from the world and the Victorian mother's role did approximate Beecher's conception.

As another once-famous educator, Mary B.

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Welch, put it in speaking of so apparently trivial a matter as the teaching of table manners:

> Table manners and habits of eating, as well as the quantity of food and its proper preparation, exercise great influence on both character and physique, and every mother should realize the fact that a well-ordered meal, served as perfectly as her circumstances will allow, makes a part of that subtle influence which is silently and powerfully evolving the future man or woman from the crude boy or girl under her care.

To the Victorians, these subtle details of daily home life were not just elevated beyond their obvious function or meaning; they were integrated in a holistic way quite foreign to contemporary thinking. Beecher even went so far as to argue that mothers who taught their children good manners were also forming "the outward exhibition of the democratic fundamental principles of impartial benevolence and equal rights."

The most striking view of this "spiritualized" home, which was sturdier yet loftier than those we inhabit today, came from the romantic landscape designer and architectural critic Andrew Jackson Downing, who popularized the Gothic Revival style in America:

> The mere sentiment of home, with its thousand associations, has, like a strong anchor, saved many a man from shipwreck in the storms of life. How much moral influence of that sentiment may be increased, by making the house all it should be, and how much an attachment is strengthened by every external sign of beauty that awakens love in the young, are so well understood, that they need no demonstration here.

The Gothic Revival style, with its spires, towers, and arched windows, may evoke images of opulent mansions such as "Lyndhurst" in Tarrytown, New York, the home of the notorious robber baron, Jay Gould. But Downing, who believed that a proper house was a "powerful means of civilization" for all classes, also offered plans for affordably modest but picturesque "workingmen's cottages" of three to four rooms. These dwellings, replete with gabled and bracketed roofs, bay windows, vine-covered trellises, and beckoning porches, achieved Downing's goal of melding utility and beauty. "There is no building, however simple," he said, "to which either good forms or something of an agreeable expression may not be given."

By World War I, such discussions of the mental, moral, and spiritual influences of architecture and domestic decor had vanished. Form famously began to follow function, not philosophy. And this decline of the spiritualized home paralleled the appropriation of family functions by outside specialists like physicians, psychiatrists, and social workers.

The spiritual and substantive stripping of the 20th-century home explains why the vaguely defined sentimental longings of baby boomers are misdirected if they settle for the 1950's nostalgia of certain conservative "family-values" crusaders. The 50's and early 60's are an easy lifeline for this generation of aging children to grab. Many boomers recall this as a time of physical and psychological security that keeps re-running on their TV's and through their heads in the black-and-white simplicity of *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*. But the 50's home, however stable, had already been reduced to one institution among many. It was no longer "the" institution standing above all others on spiritual stilts. The "colonial"-style boxes that represented 1950's middle-class security were a poor substitute for A.J. Downing's Gothic Revival creations 100 years earlier.

OF COURSE, there is also a more tangible difference between the Victorian and the contemporary home—the dramatically altered economic status of women. But this change has not all been for the better. Even as the status of working women has risen, the status of women in the home has declined drastically. In the 19th century, their domestic duties were considered "as sacred and important as any ordained to man," in Catherine Beecher's words. Running a home was a profession that required "scientific training," as did the proper nurturing of a child's "mind, body, and soul . . . at the most critical of all periods of existence." To do a woman's work successfully, one needed what Elizabeth Cady Stanton called "rare common sense, wisdom, diplomacy, a knowledge of human nature, . . . and the strong points of character that the most successful statesman possesses."

Less than a century after Mrs. Stanton made those remarks, Betty Friedan's feminist Bible, *The Feminine Mystique*, labeled housewives "parasites" and "feminine millstones" who never used their brains but instead wasted their days on "trivia" and "infantilized and dehumanized" their children with excessive maternal attention. Indeed, according to Friedan, housewifery was "a living death" that had the "lowliest state of almost any in society." Housewives were "walking corpses" who were "in as much danger as the millions who walked to their own death in the concentration camps."

Three decades later, some might dismiss such hyperbole as necessary ammunition for a social revolution that achieved enormous gains for women. But it has by now become clear that to large numbers of American women, the devaluing of women's work in the home represents not a gain but a loss.

Thus, during the 1992 presidential campaign, many educated professional women cheered Hillary Rodham Clinton's dismissal of a life spent

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at home baking cookies. They were dismayed to discover how many other women felt insulted by this put-down. Another well-publicized controversy over "progressive" opinion on this topic ensued after Mrs. Clinton's predecessor was invited to give the commencement speech at Wellesley College in 1990. About 150 students objected to the selection of Barbara Bush as an unsuitable role model for educated young women. The publisher Jessica Catto rose to Mrs. Bush's defense by asking rhetorically:

> So Barbara Bush is just a mother? So she does not have an advanced degree and therefore does not rate the honor of addressing Wellesley students? . . . A degree in the humanities is obviously no guarantee of humanity or, it seems, of minimal intelligence.

Mrs. Catto's refusal to equate educational credentials with the attainment of knowledge and virtue recalls a passage from the novelist Edith Wharton's autobiography. After a lifetime of observing at first hand the displacement of family functions by the expertise of educated professionals, she lamented the loss of

> the ancient curriculum of housekeeping, which was . . . swept aside by the "monstrous regiment" of the emancipated young women taught by their elders to despise the kitchen and the linen room, and to substitute the acquiring of university degrees for the more complex art of civilized living.

Despite the principle of choice supposedly embodied in the women's movement, the relentless feminist assault on housewifery has made *that* choice seem unworthy. The hamburger flipper is rated higher than the home cook. The therapist who eases a patient through teenage *angst* is highly valued, but a mother who accomplishes the same thing is "only" being a parent.

Hence few well-educated self-consciously modern women today would openly admit to enjoying "keeping house." Stay-at-home baby-boomer mothers feel compelled to justify their existence by reciting horror stories about nanny and day-care disasters. Or they mention the second Master's degree they are pursuing part-time to improve their future career credentials. In the 1989 movie *Parenthood*, a woman whose youngest child is about to start school worries, "Everybody's asking when I'm going back to work, like I'm supposed to." No matter how good a mother she is, she complains, "People make me feel embarrassed, like I don't have goals."

DURING the 19th century, when the home was still regarded as a sacred refuge, Mary B. Welch acknowledged that, although household duties were common in their frequency, "We make them common or uncommon by the spirit in which we do them." Catherine Beecher added, "The most minute details of household economy become elegant and refined when they are ennobled by sentiment."

Naturally both Welch and Beecher also recognized that many tasks were tedious or taxing. (Without washing machines, laundry alone could consume an entire day of every week.) Yet even the lowliest chore served a grander purpose—preserving the sanctuary of family and home.

While it is true that servants were relatively more affordable and available in the last century, only a minority of households had them, even at the height of the Gilded Age. Domestic-advice manuals, aimed mainly at middle-class women and those aspiring to their status, assumed that most households would have little or no paid domestic help. In an era when thrift was considered a quasi-religious virtue, these widely-read manuals sought to save women time and money by advising on every aspect of household management from organizing rudimentary kitchen appliances and utensils to renovating old clothes and furnishings.

It was also assumed that all children would shoulder their fair share of domestic responsibilities, and not just to lighten their mother's load. Household chores were considered essential for teaching children to appreciate their home, solidifying their link to family life, and building their character (in contrast to the modern emphasis on developing their personality). Mothers in servantless houses were even encouraged to have their children take turns as waiters at the dinner table, an activity that might provoke charges of child abuse today. Whatever the chore, its connection to the home conferred sufficient dignity that Catherine Beecher could compare her young democratic nation to "decadent" aristocratic Europe and proudly conclude, "At the present time America is the only country where there is a class of women who may be described as ladies who do their own work."

So far have we traveled from this attitude that recapturing it might seem almost impossible. Yet unless we can rethink the meaning of work in the home, we will be unable to restore that "old-fashioned notion of family" which (according to a recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News survey) the country seems to be "vaguely searching for." For redignifying domestic work—from the meat-and-potatoes to the frills—would not only raise the status of those who do it; it is a necessary step to respiritualizing the home and restoring the traditional values that most Americans say they want to strengthen.

One thing is certain: the home cannot be reinstated in its former elevated perch through legislation, not even by the Family Leave Act. To be sure, government policies and economic trends affect the home. But any attempt to "moralize" the nation from the top down would be like beginning construction of a house with a roof in-

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stead of a foundation. To work from the ground up means changing the way we think and talk about the home and everything that goes into making it a home.

IN A DESACRALIZED, bottom-line society that has stripped away the mystique from femininity and sex, we have lost the very intangibles that once added meaning to material existence. Just as we have unmasked and demystified the idea of woman as the "other," we have lost the immeasurable "otherness" of a shared past that enabled our ancestors to understand instinctively why frills like embroidered linens and sprigs of parsley were not frivolous, and how teaching manners to a child could affect the course of democracy. As we lose the living cultural memory of those generations, we are left trying to spice a stew that "needs something" we cannot name, because it has become foreign to our palate.

I got a taste of this "something" from a ninetyish lady I met at a retirement home. As a child, she had asked her father why he always changed his collar and cuffs (which used to be separate from shirts) after work even when they were not dirty. He replied that wearing a collar and cuffs as fresh and white as the dining-room tablecloth was a mark of respect for her mother and the meal she prepared, but also a way of showing his children that family dinners deserved *their* best appearance. A long lifetime later, this woman wondered aloud whether her grandchildren would have divorced so quickly if they had had the same respect for their spouses and for the family dinners that were once much more than occasions for refueling their bodies.

Expecting modern time-pressured families to replicate the hours and reverence once devoted to Victorian meals may seem as impractical as suggesting that they acquire a historic sense of home by marrying, giving birth, and dying there, as their ancestors did. What is essential, though, is that people assess both the substantive and the transcendent meaning of domestic rituals before discarding or diluting them. Preserving them might involve some form of sacrifice. But there is no such thing as painless religion, even the nondenominational religion of the home practiced by the Victorians. Whatever else "traditional" family values mean, they presume respect for the home where they are nurtured and for those who actively create and maintain it. Home is the place where family values are transmitted. The one must be venerated for the other to be preserved.

So I owe a belated apology to the woman whose embroidered linens I once scorned. While my great-grandmother lacked the fundamental rights her female descendants take for granted, I can finally imagine that she enjoyed a meaningful life, without having either a career or a graduate degree. I can admire not only her craftsmanship, but her willingness to begin creating her home even before she had one.

This lost sentiment of home, once so strong that A.J. Downing could celebrate its "thousand associations" that "need no demonstration here," is now all but forgotten. What remains is a widespread longing for a sanctuary from a world that feels meaner and emptier as it grows wealthier and more cosmopolitan—and this is a longing that neither feminists nor fundamentalists know how to satisfy.

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No White Males Need Apply

Midge Decter

FILLING a vacancy on the Supreme Court is, of course, among the most consequential of presidential acts—not quite so grave, perhaps, as taking the nation into war, but in the long run probably of more lasting effect. Indeed, the Court has itself become something of a theater of war, one in which the terms that the victors succeed in imposing upon the vanquished can shape the life of the country for generations. Thus every resignation from that body nowadays sets off an immediate and lively round of national debate. In addition to the inevitable gossip about whose name is most likely to be on the famous "short list," there is much proffering of advice to the President about where his duty now lies.

The resignation of Justice Harry Blackmun, announced on April 5, was certainly no exception—despite the fact that since the Justice and the President stood pretty much on the same side of the political street, there was general agreement that whoever was appointed would in all likelihood not make much difference to the ideological balance of the Court. Still, for at least some of the President's would-be advisers, there were other kinds of balance to worry about. As early as April 7 the *New York Times* editorialists, for instance, already found themselves quite concerned about certain rumors that were coming out of Washington, and they hastened to share their concerns with Clinton in an editorial entitled "How to Fill a Justice's Shoes."

Following Blackmun's announcement, the President had declared his intention to appoint someone of "genuine stature and largeness of ability and spirit" to the Court. Such generality, the editorial began, would not suffice: Clinton must make sure to find someone—to be sure, the *Times* agreed, "of unquestioned excellence"—who would, just as Blackmun had done, "hold the line on civil rights, civil liberties, abortion, religious liberty, and other precious rights that the Reagan and Bush administrations sought to restrict."

But this alone would not be sufficient, either. In seeking this excellent someone who would protect the nation's basic liberties from the depredations of some future Reagan or Bush, the President also needed "to reach beyond the herd of white male candidates who have long been amply represented on the Court." With this nomination, Clinton had the chance "to make the high court look more like the face of America"; and to do so "would enhance the stature, competence, and spirit of the Supreme Court itself." For, the editorial continued, "The institution's ability to adjudicate for an increasingly diverse nation will be improved if it has more members who come from more richly diverse communities."

Though Clinton had already done much to further "diversity" in the making of appointments, the *Times* was disturbed by the talk being bruited about in Washington that the new nominee to the Supreme Court would be selected from a certain list of white males, among them such Washington insiders as Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. These were able figures, the editorial conceded, but the list that so prominently featured them "is not a sign that the administration is thinking expansively and creatively." American Presidents, after all, had long attempted to achieve some kinds of variety, such as geographic balance, on the Court. Now there was an opportunity to "enrich the mix of the Court" in "innovative ways."

The appointment of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the editorial continued, had been just such an innovation, taking the Court beyond the "gender 'breakthrough'" represented by the earlier appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor as its first woman Justice. Why not, then, another woman? (The *Times* mentioned the name of New York's Chief Judge, Judith Kaye.) Or another black?: ". . . the Court has need of . . . stronger assertion of traditional civil-rights protections," especially since its only black member, Clarence Thomas, "continues to rule so far outside the tradition of Thurgood Marshall." (Here the *Times* suggested Solicitor General Drew Days.) Or this enrichment might take the form of appointing the first Hispanic to the Court. (The *Times* confessed to having heard of only one—Judge José Cabranes of the federal court in Connecticut—but was happy to have learned from a number of "specialists" that "the legal field is full of top-flight Hispanic lawyers and judges.")

The editorial reminded the President that Justice Blackmun began his Supreme Court service on a body almost exclusively composed of white males. "He grew and grew in the job. In time he gave instruction to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on the emancipation of women, and he had much to teach Justice Thomas about racial fairness."

In conclusion, the editorial admonished the President: "A Supreme Court that looks more like America can do more for justice because it starts by earning more of

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America's confidence. President Clinton . . . know[s] this, and should not forget it."

THE question that immediately springs to mind about this editorial is whether its author can possibly be aware that, in singing the praises of Justice Blackmun as he does, he is contradicting the very point he has set out to make.

According to the editorialist, Blackmun was essential to holding the line when Reagan and Bush sought to restrict so many of "our precious rights." But however else one might wish to characterize the good Justice, he is beyond doubt a white male—indeed, as they say, a quintessential white male—from Minneapolis, a predominantly white Midwestern city. And even though he cannot claim, in the *Times*'s view of things, to "look more like America," he was evidently able, or so the editorial itself tells us, to offer instruction in their proper duties to two colleagues who do.*

Admittedly, this is not something any white male could be expected to manage right off the bat. He would first, like Justice Blackmun (a Republican appointed by Richard Nixon), have to "grow"—a process, as we know, that has nothing to do with an increase in stature and everything to do with a firming-up and sharpening of the correctness of one's thinking on a particular range of social issues. But since at least one of the two women on the Court required instruction on the emancipation of women, while the one black, in the *Times*'s judgment, has not even yet learned much about racial fairness, you might think that another white male would be the safest bet.

Except, of course, for that problem of "looks." According to the *Times*, enriching the "mix" of the Court with another woman or black or Hispanic (Asians have evidently not yet made their mark on the look of the country) will "[earn] more of America's confidence." Leaving aside what this prediction says about the *Times*'s opinion of the quality of citizenship of America's blacks and Hispanics and women, it is difficult to imagine what might happen in this most litigious of societies if Americans were to repose any more confidence in the Court than they already do. Perhaps in the end they might simply do away with legislatures altogether.

As it happens, though, the real danger is on the other foot. For if the *Times* were to get its way, the chances are that, far from earning "more of America's confidence," the Court would sink in public esteem, just as so many other great institutions—including the *Times* itself—have done when they have surrendered, whether out of expediency or out of misguided ideas, to similar demands for "diversity."

* To take up the question of whether Minneapolis "looks" more or less "like America" than, say, Los Angeles or the South Bronx would make for a lively national debate—perhaps one that is by now long overdue.

Syllabus Conundrum?

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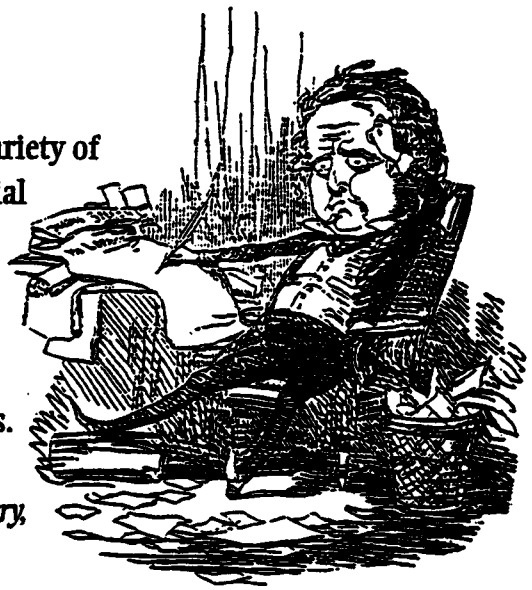

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THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY: FUNDAMENTAL FAIRNESS IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY. BY LANI GUINIER. *Martin Kessler Books/Free Press. 324 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by LINDA CHAVEZ

PRESIDENT Clinton's decision last June to withdraw the nomination of Lani Guinier as head of the Justice Department's civil-rights division averted a public debate in which his administration would inevitably have been depicted as championing racial quotas for elected officials. Guinier, a Friend of Bill (and Hillary), had been a prolific proponent of racial parity for elected officials for more than a decade, first as a litigator for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and then as a scholar. Oddly, however, the President seemed unconcerned about Guinier's record in the political world, where she had won dozens of suits—including one against the state of Arkansas when he was governor—forcing local jurisdictions to rewrite election rules to guarantee racial representation. Instead, the President—and most of Guinier's critics—focused on her theoretical writings.

What was odd about this was that many of the controversial remedies Guinier advocated in her law-review articles had already become accepted practice in voting-rights enforcement. The Justice Department—under both Republican and Democratic Presidents—now routinely compels local jurisdictions to modify rules to achieve racial parity in elective offices. It would thus seem that in her critics' eyes, Guinier's chief sin lay in providing a theoretical framework for what, thanks in part to her own efforts, had already become public policy.

Because her nomination was withdrawn, Guinier has complained bitterly that she was denied a hearing for her views. With the publication of *The Tyranny of the Majority*, those views will, one may hope, receive the careful scrutiny they deserve. Most of the law-review articles that provoked the controversy are included here, though some are in edited form. Guinier has also added a new introduction as well as brief explanatory prefaces to each of the essays, which attempt to soften the tone of her arguments. Indeed, the most striking feature of this book is the discrepancy between the moderate rhetoric of the new material and the jeremiads of the reprinted articles.

Guinier claims that her only interest is to promote "fair play," so that minorities will have an equal chance of influencing legislative outcomes. Yet to achieve this objective, she would drastically alter current voting systems to eliminate majority rule both in the electorate and in legislative bodies. Lest these proposals seem too radical, Guinier begins the main argument of her book with two stories; the first is meant to show that she is prescribing nothing more extreme than the "principle of taking turns," the second to illustrate what happens when that principle is neglected.

The first example, which has been widely repeated both by Guinier and by other commentators, concerns her four-year-old son Nikolas. It seems that when Nikolas's friends cannot decide whether to play hide-and-seek or tag, they do not settle the matter by majority vote—they take turns! If it works in Nikolas's play group, surely the same principle, if transposed to the electoral and legislative process, would lead to "a more cooperative political style of decision-making."

But why effect such a transposition? Guinier's second example attempts to explain why. "In a racially divided society, majority rule may be perceived as majority tyranny." The example here is from a Catholic boys' school in Chicago, Brother Rice, where a group of black seniors chose to hold their own separate prom two years ago.

In Guinier's telling, the decision came about because black students, who made up about 12 percent of the graduating class, had no meaningful opportunity to choose the music for the official dance, despite an ostensibly democratic process that allowed each senior to vote for his three favorite songs. She cites the complaint of one black senior: "For every vote we had, there were eight votes for what they wanted. . . . [W]ith us being in the minority, we're always outvoted. It's as if we don't count." The episode, according to Guinier, clearly illustrates why simple majority rule in a multiracial democracy will always leave minorities losers when their interests or preferences differ from the majority's.

But Guinier's version distorts what actually happened. It was not white recalcitrance over black grievances that provoked the split at Brother Rice, but a decision by *some* black students that separate was better when it came to race. The same *New York Times* article from which Guinier quotes also reported that school administrators tried to reach a compromise with the organizers of the black prom, but the latter chose to boycott the meetings set up to resolve the issue. The article also noted that one-sixth of the black seniors attended the official prom with their white classmates, who commonly expressed the sentiment that they "missed their friends and felt the class was not whole without the black students." Guinier omits these inconvenient details because they undermine her thesis that white hostility to black interests necessitates abandoning majority rule.

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What happened at Brother Rice was hardly unique. In the last few years, black students have demanded separate commencement exercises, separate dorms, separate cultural centers, and race-based curricula at scores of schools from Stanford to the University of North Carolina. These developments point to a growing racial polarization in the country, but not one which refutes the legitimacy of majority rule.

And herein lies the main problem not only with Guinier's analysis but with current voting-rights enforcement in general. Both might make a kind of sense in a world in which white racism was rampant and extreme measures had to be instituted to overcome it—the world, say, of the Deep South at the time the Voting Rights Act was enacted in 1965. But ours is not such a world—not even in the South, much less in the nation as a whole.

In 1965, Southern jurisdictions used every means at their disposal—including poll taxes, grossly unfair literacy tests, and physical and economic intimidation—to deny blacks the right to vote. Consequently, in Mississippi, for example, only 6 percent of blacks were registered; and throughout the South, only 100 blacks held elective office. Today, registration among blacks in some jurisdictions actually exceeds that of whites, and of the more than 8,000 elected offices held by blacks nationwide, nearly 5,500 are in the South alone.

Yet voting-rights enforcement—and the law itself—have actually become more draconian, not less. As Abigail Thernstrom shows in *Whose Votes Count?*, voting-rights litigation has become "a quick and easy means of 'improving' electoral procedures—one that circumvents uncertain and time-consuming political channels and yields almost guaranteed results." Contrary to Guinier's doleful depiction of the status quo, changes made in the voting-rights law in 1982 have conferred unprecedented power on black and Hispanic voters to insist on elective methods that will maximize minority officeholding.

Indeed, the number of federal officeholders who are black has nearly doubled since 1982, from 20 to 39. But Guinier is unimpressed even by these gains. Her goal goes beyond achieving racial parity. She wants to guarantee "political equality," which she defines as giving each *group* a right to have its interests both represented and "satisfied a fair proportion of the time." And she goes on to insist that minority elected officials, if they are truly to represent minority interests, must be "authentic."

DURING the controversy over her nomination, Guinier was much criticized for having implied in one of her articles that former Virginia governor Doug Wilder might be less than completely "authentic" because his margin of victory had been provided by whites. But Guinier's real problem with Wilder probably had more to do with the governor's moderate agenda and record of fiscal prudence. It is hard to imagine Guinier questioning, for example, the authenticity of Congressman Ron Dellums, who represents a district that is only 29 percent black but that includes the affluent and decidedly left-wing Berkeley area. When push comes to shove, what Guinier means by "authentic leaders" are those who support radically redistributionist policies. Representative Bernie Sanders—a white socialist—would certainly qualify under this standard, but not Representative Gary Franks, a black Republican.

In this context, Guinier's effusive claim to be a Madisonian democrat rings especially hollow. Her ideas bear nothing in common with those of Madison, Hamilton, or Tocqueville, figures to whom she makes reference more than a dozen times. As Thernstrom and others have pointed out, Guinier's proposal for a minority legislative veto is, rather, strikingly similar to John C. Calhoun's proposal to give slaveholder states veto power over federal legislation they did not like. Try as she might to wrap herself in the respectable garb of the Founders, there are few democratic threads that run through this Empress's new clothes.

Paradox

DISRAELI: A BIOGRAPHY. BY STANLEY WEINTRAUB. *Truman Talley Books/Dutton. 717 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by EDWARD ALEXANDER

IN AUGUST 1867 England took a famous "leap in the dark" by passing the Second Reform Bill, which enfranchised the urban working classes (women excepted), nearly doubled the size of the electorate, and committed the country irrevocably to democracy. The bill had been guided through the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who during the debate spoke no fewer than 310 times on its behalf in order "to prepare the mind of the country and to educate . . . our party"—which happened, of course, to be the Tory party.

That the Tory party should have bestowed upon England the new democratic dispensation must have seemed the ultimate paradox in that age of paradoxes, unless one counts the even greater paradox that the Tories, a party of aristocrats notorious for not reading books, a party derided by J.S. Mill as "the stupid party," was now being guided by a novelist and literary man with the wildly improbable name of Benjamin Disraeli.

Nor do the paradoxes end there. In *Disraeli*, Stanley Weintraub gives us a brilliant portrait of someone who aspired to be at once a new Byron and a world-historical statesman; who was a brazen dandy in exotic clothes and jewelry; a witty and inventive novelist who was imitated by Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville; a preserver of constitutional monarchy and of the British empire; an outsider, born Jewish, who overcame the initial hostility of Queen Victoria to become her favorite among the eleven Prime Ministers who served her.

As Weintraub demonstrates in his interweaving of Disraeli's pub-

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lic and private motives, literary and political aspirations, careful observers of the career of this potent wizard should not have been surprised that he ended by "dishing the Whigs" and carrying Reform. He had begun in politics as a "Radical Conservative," aspiring to adapt popular causes to the Conservative agenda. And in his novel *Coningsby* (1844), which spans the years from the 1832 Reform Bill to the general election of 1841, he famously defined Conservative government as "Tory men and Whig measures."

True, in the 1850's Disraeli promised to *oppose* electoral reform, and early in the 60's he attributed England's greatness to its traditional, undemocratic customs, praising the late Prince Albert for conferring upon the country "the blessings of absolute government." As this suggests, he was often a fence-sitter; but he was also not without convictions. Although he did genuinely believe in the landed classes and traditional values, he also showed genuine sympathy with popular causes and the plight of the working poor, his subject in *Sybil, or, The Two Nations* (1845).

Unfavorable reactions to the 1867 Reform Bill and to the elevation of Disraeli to the position of Prime Minister in 1868 tended to stress the most unpalatable paradox of all: that this Christian nation was now to be led by a Jew (albeit one who had been baptized as a child into the Church of England). Weintraub, whose book cannot compare in length with the six-volume classic by Monypenny and Buckle (1910-19), nevertheless gives the fullest picture we have of Disraeli within the context of Victorian political warfare and ideological debate—and nowhere is this amplitude more impressive than in his documentation of the extent to which Disraeli was thought of by friends, colleagues, enemies, and himself as a Jew.

Thus, the relentlessly anti-Semitic and Radical magazine *Punch* depicted the Disraeli of 1867 in the guise of Dickens's Fagin, stealing the opposition's bill from its back pocket. Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish sage, ranted against Disraeli as "a cursed old Jew, not worth his weight in cold bacon." The famous Oxford scholar Benjamin Jowett complained that the nation was being run by "a wandering Jew." The poet Coventry Patmore bemoaned 1867 as "The year of the great crime, / When the false English nobles, and their Jew, / By God demented, slew / The trust they stood twice pledged to keep from wrong." Lord Palmerston, the former Prime Minister, declared: "We are all dreadfully disgusted at the prospect of having a Jew for our Prime Minister." W.E. Gladstone, the future Prime Minister and Disraeli's great rival, would allege: "Though he has been baptized, his Jew feelings are the most radical & the most real . . . portion of his profoundly falsified nature."

But in what sense *was* Disraeli a Jew? He truthfully reported that "I was not bred among my race and was nourished in great prejudice against them." His grandmother, Sarah Shiprut de Gabay, was so venomous on the subject that, Weintraub speculates, she may have provided the germ for Princess Alcharisi, the feminist Jewish anti-Semite in George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda*. Disraeli's father, Isaac

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D'Israeli, did have his son circumcised—an occasion Weintraub wittily describes as "the only Judaic rite in which [Ben] would be a central figure"—but thereafter, in matters concerning Judaism, Isaac showed himself to be a loyal disciple of his beloved Voltaire. In 1813, selected to be a warden of his synagogue, he not only rejected the honor but refused to pay the fine of 40 pounds imposed on anyone who declined such an office.

In March 1817, as young Ben was approaching bar-mitzvah age, his father responded with alacrity to the suggestion of a Christian friend that he have his children baptized into the Church of England, so that they could have the chances available to other English children. On July 11, younger brothers Raphael and Jacobus were duly baptized (and transformed into Ralph and James). Ben was reluctant, but succumbed on July 31, with his sister Sarah following shortly after; the parents remained unbaptized.

FOR some time, Disraeli's inner world, like his outer, showed little sign of his Jewish "background." Weintraub reports that when he traveled to the Holy Land as a young man, "of Jewish places of worship he saw nothing," and his glowing description of Jerusalem makes no mention of Jews whatsoever. Such facts would not surprise those of his latter-day critics who have alleged that Disraeli's ideas of Jewishness were never hindered by any actual knowledge of the subject.

But those ideas did nevertheless permeate his writings, repeatedly and conspicuously so—as did Disraeli's pride "in that sacred and romantic people from whom I derive my blood and name." Why, Weintraub asks, not only at the very beginning of a parliamentary career but frequently thereafter, in a country that still banned real, unconverted Jews from Parliament, would Disraeli go out of his way to glorify his Jewish origins? Weintraub's answer to this question is essentially circular: however dishonorable Disraeli's behavior may have been in other areas—toward women, or in finance, or in the grime of political maneuver—he always behaved honorably and "proudly" toward the Jewish background from which he had been severed by his father.

A fuller explanation remains buried deep within the bizarre, discomfiting mixture of sense and (mostly) nonsense that is Disraeli's theory of "racial Judaism." Starting from the plausible notion that, as a character in his novel *Tancred* (1847) says, Jesus "was born a Jew, lived a Jew, and died a Jew," Disraeli went on to think of Christianity as "completed Judaism." In his novels, the spokesmen for the author's point of view urge Jews to take pride in the fact that "half Christendom worships a Jewess, and the other half a Jew," and that the Church perpetuates Jewish beliefs, history, literature, culture, and institutions.

DISRAELI's ignorance of Judaism was formidable; he was unaware of the dietary laws, and a clergyman in his employ had to remind him—and was fired for doing so—that the Sabbath of which his master was contemptuous was a Jewish institution. So perhaps it is not altogether incredible that Disraeli should also have seemed blind to the fact that Christianity's vital energy derived in part from the idea that the Jews, because they had rejected and killed Christ, had been superseded by a new people and a new covenant. Did he not know that his notion of Christianity as "completed Judaism" merely confirmed the sorts of common assumptions about the Jews that he wished to discredit? Apparently he did not.

Another way of putting this would be to say that Disraeli shared the racism that led English anti-Semites to attack him. Like them, he viewed the Jews not as a community with a specific religion, nationality, shared memories and hopes, but as a "race," united by blood and even by a conspiracy to rule the world. In *Tancred*, Sidonia, perhaps the most important of Disraeli's fictional spokesmen, sees crypto-Jews managing affairs everywhere, as professors, ambassadors, generals, cabinet members; he also wonders whether Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven were Jewish. In his biography of Lord George Bentinck (1852), we are told: "The first Jesuits were Jews; that mysterious Russian diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organized and principally carried on by Jews. . . men of Jewish race are found at the head of every one of [communist and socialist] groups." In *Endymion*, a novel that Disraeli (with characteristically unflagging energy) wrote just after retiring from politics in 1880, a sympathetic character observes that "Semites now exercise a vast influence over affairs through their smallest though most peculiar family, the Jews."

The late Hannah Arendt, in a fierce attack on Disraeli, correctly pointed out that he "produced the entire set of theories about Jewish influence and organization that we usually find in the more vicious forms of anti-Semitism." And she went on:

> Disraeli, though certainly not the only "exception Jew" to believe in his own chosenness without believing in Him who chooses and rejects, was the only one who produced a full-blown race doctrine out of this empty concept of a historic mission.

Weintraub never really faces up to Arendt's criticism, which he takes note of only in an appendix on sources. Yet it is clear from this book that several of the anti-Semitic assaults on Disraeli by his contemporaries made effective use of his own belief that "all is race."

BUT just as there is much that is irresistible in Disraeli the man, so there is something genuine and redeeming in Disraeli's Jewish imaginings. In *Tancred*, he alludes to the "days of political justice when Jerusalem belonged to the Jews," and says that those days will return because the Jews in exile have diligently gone on pretending they were still living in their ancient homeland. In one of the few passages where he shows some awareness of Jewish religious practice, Disraeli describes Jews in Whitechapel or some other "icy clime" preparing once every year to live for a week in their *sukkah*. He concludes:

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> The vineyards of Israel have ceased to exist, but the eternal law enjoins the children of Israel still to celebrate the vintage. A race that persist in celebrating their vintage, although they have no fruits to gather, will regain their vineyards.

Although Hannah Arendt made Disraeli the type of those who substitute "Jewishness" for Judaism, one might as plausibly argue that he substantiated the witticism that when a man can no longer be a Jew, he becomes a Zionist. He was more a Joseph than a Moses, and England was the Israel of his imagination; yet he deserves the street named after him in modern Jerusalem.

X-ers Speak

NEXT: YOUNG AMERICAN WRITERS ON THE NEW GENERATION. EDITED BY ERIC LIU. *Norton. 248 pp. $21.00.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY BLOOM

"BABY BUST," "Boomerang," "New Lost Generation"—these are some of the more unflattering labels affixed to the 80 million Americans born between 1961 and 1981, otherwise known as "Generation X," an epithet lifted from the title of a 1991 novel by one of their chroniclers, Douglas Coupland.

Various cover stories in various magazines—among them *Time*, *Fortune*, and the *Atlantic*—have attempted to delve into the character of Generation X, and movies like *Singles* and this year's *Reality Bites* have been hailed for capturing its dating and mating habits, its career aspirations (such as they are), and its outlook on life. And for every sympathetic portrayal there is another that is considerably less so. Thus, these young people have been described as a collection of selfish whiners, complaining about the deficit and a tight job market even as they come of age in a period of relative peace and prosperity. Others go a step further, arguing that prolonged exposure to MTV has left an entire generation spiritually lobotomized.

Twenty-somethings naturally believe that their generation is too heterogeneous to be characterized so easily. *Next* is an attempt to set the record straight. Eric Liu, the twenty-four-year-old editor of this anthology of young writers, the oldest of whom is thirty-two, hopes to move beyond the "superficial stereotypes" that characterize his generation. His contributors, he announces, are "individuals, not archetypes": "We are black, white, Asian, Latino, straight, gay, liberal, conservative—and, each of us, independent."

Not unexpectedly, this claim turns out to be an exaggeration. Despite the superficial tokens of diversity—the Angry Young Black, the Angry Young Gay, the Feminist Pornographer, etc.—Liu's essayists tend toward uniformity. Although he is right to deny that they represent a collective "voice of the generation," they do represent this generation's university-educated, "progressive" elite. Virtually all of them are blandly secular, and virtually all of them are blithely nostalgic for the 1960's they never knew. In short, they are largely captive to the conventional wisdom of their time and place.

Still, they are worth listening to, if only because they will dominate the op-ed pages of the future. Liu, euphemistically, notes that his contributors tend to project a "worldly-wise" perspective on life—but on inspection the quality he is referring to more closely resembles simple cynicism. A few of the essayists in *Next* even take this generational cynicism as their theme, and attempt to explain its source.

Thus, according to one writer here, the heroes that inspired previous generations of young people have been torn down by scandalmongering journalists and revisionist historians. Another blames the older generation of Baby Boomers: the hypocrisies of the forty-something set have made it impossible for the twenty-somethings to take any beliefs seriously. Still others, while decrying the pessimism of their cohorts, bravely and a little

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JEFFREY BLOOM, *a new contributor, is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago and a freelance writer living in Washington, D.C.*

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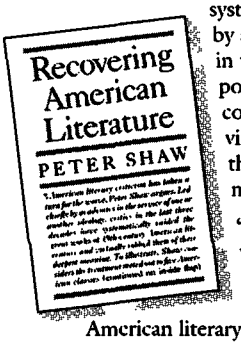

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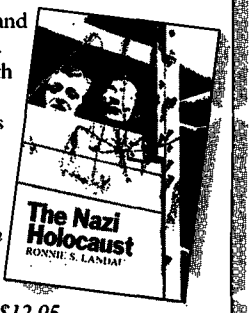

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forcedly profess their own dogged faith in the American Dream, or in the melting pot, or in some variant of pragmatic idealism.

Elizabeth Wurtzel, a twenty-six-year-old who is a former pop-music critic for the *New Yorker*, provides perhaps the most compelling explanation for the cynicism of her generation. Drawing on her own experience, she claims that young people have been severely affected, if not altogether traumatized, by America's divorce revolution. A number of other pieces in *Next* either explicitly or implicitly support her in this contention.

Wurtzel's essay, "Parental Guidance Suggested," breathes life into the statistics surrounding divorce. Her poignant account begins in her junior year at Harvard. She is in the mental ward of a hospital, in a stupor induced by an "industrial-strength antipsychotic," trying to explain to the therapist on duty why she cannot stop crying. It seems that her parents divorced when she was two. At camp, as a child, she was acutely homesick, so much so that she spent the whole summer desperately planning her ride back to her "minimal and unstable home."

The therapist is puzzled by the story. "There's no way," Wurtzel reports, "to ever make her understand that homesickness is just a state of mind for me, that I'm always missing someone or some place or something, I'm always trying to get back to some imaginary somewhere."

Wurtzel describes a growing legion of the walking wounded. Their childhoods are filled with sad memories of "schlepping between two households, always lugging an overnight bag." They go off to college gladly, just to get away from houses that were never homes. After graduation, they dabble in adulthood in tacky starter apartments, but remain, fundamentally, homeless. Their "independence" is really only a permanent loneliness. Having been raised in what the late Allan Bloom called the "school of conditional relationships," they develop a bitter skepticism about the possibility of lasting commitment.

"We didn't learn to break promises and (marriage) vows from big bad bullies at school," Wurtzel writes; "we learned [it] from watching our parents deny every word they once said to each other." And the "we," she insists, includes children from relatively happy homes as well. Looking around, they too see that "the family unit is not sacred, and this adds a degree of uncertainty to their own plans."

THESE young people, then, are in a pathetic bind. In polls, they consistently rate family life as the key to happiness. Yet the "sacredness" of the home is an idea that experience has rendered laughable to them, a quaint piety. Though they tend to lapse into self-pity, and self-indulgence, about the pain they feel, nevertheless the pain is real.

Is there a way out? Some of the contributors to *Next* hope that ethnic solidarity can alleviate the isolation that marks themselves and their friends. But what they mean by this—really, a thin multiculturalism—bears little resemblance to the ethnicity of the past. Italian-Americans, Jewish-Americans, and others were held together by family as well as ethnic ties. Draping a tribal garb over isolated individual loneliness is no substitute for what is missing.

Karen Lehrman, an editor at the *Wilson Quarterly*, points in her essay to a more intriguing source of hope: the persistence of nature. Now that women have gained a certain baseline of equality with men, she writes, perhaps they can dust off some old romantic notions that have recently been forbidden them—like flirtation, adornment, and courtship. She herself admits to being a confirmed "looksist," someone who holds the nefarious belief that some people are more attractive than others.

Needless to say, Lehrman does not explain how romance and possessiveness are to be reconciled in the sort of "egalitarian relationship" she favors; what if newly-minted Romeos turn into jealous Othellos? Predictably, she wants to have it both ways: men should be at once hot-blooded lovers and soberly judicious with regard to women's rights. Where such men are to be found remains unclear.

To her credit, though, Lehrman does at least start from the premise that men and women belong together. Instead of trying to stamp nature out, she actually wants to build on it. What she has seen is that courtship and manners cultivate, and humanize, natural sexual instincts. One is tempted to weep at the belatedness of her insight—did it really have to take the destruction of the family to rediscover this nugget of truth? But we do have to begin somewhere, after all, and a revival of courtship, even in Lehrman's qualifiedly "egalitarian" form, would certainly do much to improve today's bleak dating scene—as things stand now, the attachments many young people make (and just as easily unmake) only serve to confirm all their assumptions about the impermanence of human relationships.

In an odd sense, the *Next* anthology does go beyond the media stereotypes about Generation X: when one hears the X-ers in their own "unfiltered" voices, they sound,

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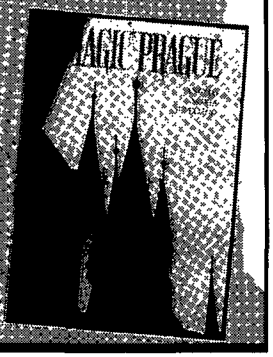

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if anything, even worse off than advertised. Still, to judge by these essays, for at least some of them there may now, at long last, be nowhere to go but up.

Battle of the Books

RECOVERING AMERICAN LITERATURE. BY PETER SHAW. *Ivan R. Dee. 203 pp. $22.00.*

Reviewed by EVELYN TOYNTON

ONE of the peculiar luxuries that literature has always afforded us is the chance to experience to the full the kind of conflicted emotions we often have to suppress in our daily lives. Confronted with a painful dilemma in our own experience, we are forced to shut out certain perceptions, longings, sympathies in order to act upon others. Confronted with a painful dilemma in the life of a fictional character, we need shut out nothing; since no action is required of us, we can respond to all the competing claims on our sympathies.

This is surely at least part of what was meant when it used to be claimed that reading was a broadening experience. And by this reckoning, the greatest novelists are those who make us feel most intensely the conflicts their characters face, conveying both the anguish and the necessity of making impossible choices.

Nowadays, however, such a view is considered not only old-fashioned but morally obtuse—at least among professors of literature. Rather than addling our brains with complexity, novels, especially the great novels of the past, are expected to deliver unmistakable messages, to contain explicit verdicts on matters of right and wrong exactly as the professors see these matters; their authors are now judged—and usually found wanting—according to the positions they are deemed to have taken on the evils of consumer capitalism or the subjugation of women. Ambiguity, once regarded as something of a virtue in literary works, has come to be seen as an ethical defect, a refusal to engage directly with sociopolitical questions.

There is, of course, something inherently ridiculous about the spectacle of literature professors poring grimly over 19th-century novels to determine how strictly they adhere to the tenets of political correctness. But as is amply demonstrated in Peter Shaw's valuable new book, *Recovering American Literature,* the humor of the situation is lost on the professors themselves; irony, like ambiguity, has been stringently excluded from the range of their responses, and righteous indignation is the order of the day.

One of the appealing qualities of Shaw's own writing is his lack of counter-indignation. If today's "Battle of the Books" has sometimes grown strident on both sides, Shaw retains his tone of mild reasonableness throughout, with occasional leavenings of rueful wit. And despite his justifiable dismay at the wholesale politicization of literature in our universities, he fully acknowledges the adversarial impulse, the "oppositionism," that lies "at the heart" of the 19th-century American novels that are his particular objects of discussion. The project of "recovering American literature," he writes, "does not mean neglecting those extra-literary impulses. But it does mean treating each of them in its literary as well as its political dimensions."

To accomplish this aim, Shaw examines—and patiently discredits—recent critical writing on five classics of American fiction: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter,* Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd,* Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* and Henry James's *The Bostonians;* in an appendix, he also dissects current academic interpretations of *Typee,* Melville's youthful memoir of a brief stay among the cannibal islanders of the Marquesas.

FOR anyone unfamiliar with Shaw's previous book, *The War Against the Intellect*—or anyone fortunate enough not to be acquainted with current trends in the academy—

EVELYN TOYNTON *has written about literature in the* New York Times, *the* American Scholar, *and elsewhere.*

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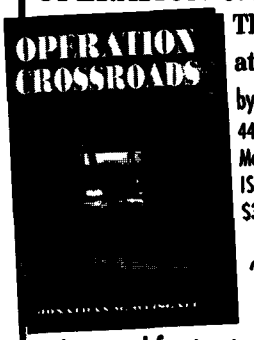

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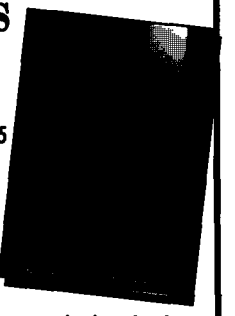

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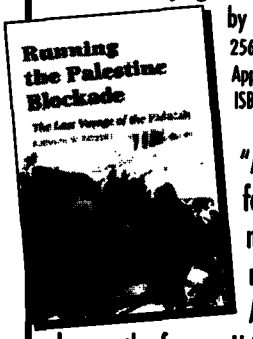

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merely reading the quotations he adduces in evidence may come as something of a shock. We find, for example, the cannibalism of the South Sea Islanders (as depicted by Melville) lavishly praised by one academic as a "ritual ingestion of the antagonist's virtue" and a practice "mindful of the individuality of the vanquished." "Who are the real cannibals," another critic asks scornfully, "the Typees who practice a ritual of eating the flesh of their dead attackers or the aggressor nations who have come to devour the islands?" And despite Melville's explicit horror at the Typees' eating habits—which extended to many others besides their "dead attackers"—still another critic has Melville believing "that savagery was a term applicable to the Europeans' colonial and missionary activities in the Pacific rather than to the people they practiced upon."

A similar antagonism toward Western "so-called civilization" also permeates the critics' views of *Billy Budd*, one of the greatest portrayals in fiction of a character caught in a tragic dilemma. Billy is a guileless sailor, a pure spirit, serving on a British warship heading into battle with the French. When he is wrongly accused by a malicious master-at-arms of planning to mutiny, the ship's captain, Vere, brings Billy face to face with his accuser so that he can clear himself; but Billy's stutter renders him helpless to answer the charges against him. In his frustration, he strikes out instead, and accidentally kills his accuser.

Captain Vere, who believes absolutely in Billy's innocence, is nevertheless compelled by the harsh code of martial law to have him tried by a jury of ship's officers. Since the only allowable sentence for killing a senior officer is death, the innocent Billy is hanged the next morning, leaving Vere haunted by his memory. Shortly afterward, Vere dies in battle, with Billy's name on his lips.

Yet the critics cited by Shaw have decided that Vere, notwithstanding Melville's sympathetic portrayal of him, is actually a symbol of corrupt authoritarianism, of utter depravity, of capitalist exploitation of labor; they not only designate him a "war criminal" but compare him to the "commandant of a concentration camp." Though no critic has been able to deny that Melville presents Vere as a thoroughly honorable and decent man, tormented by his part in Billy's end, the current received wisdom is that we are not supposed to take him literally; the admiration Melville expresses is actually, we are to understand, offered in a mocking spirit.

According to this view of things, the only moral course for Vere would be to abandon the entire social system he is pledged to uphold—and risk a total breakdown of discipline among the crew he is about to lead into battle—by refusing to bring Billy to trial. Furthermore, although Vere, his ship, and the particular laws that mandate Billy's death are all British, the tale has been interpreted as being actually about the "police state" and the "war machine" of the United States: "[It] foreshadows . . . the triumph of militarism and imperialism in America."

Then there is *Huckleberry Finn*, which is denounced for its failure explicitly to condemn the institution of slavery and all those who failed to wage war against it. As for *The Scarlet Letter*, it is either attacked for its evident ambiguity on the question of the rightness of Hester Prynne's punishment for adultery or reinterpreted as a novel of protest against the allegedly patriarchal, phallocentric society Hawthorne portrays.

Finally, we come to *The Bostonians*, the story of Verena Tarrant, a young woman caught between her newfound devotion to the feminist cause—and to the rich, puritanical suffragist who has made Verena her protégée and mouthpiece—and her attraction to an impoverished, reactionary, ex-Confederate soldier named Basil Ransom. The novel's outcome—Verena deserts the cause for the man—has traditionally been interpreted as the triumph of Verena's natural impulses over the bloodless dogmas she has been enlisted to serve.

Whatever one thinks of the cause of women's rights, the ending—which James never tries to present as morally correct, or even necessarily a promise of happiness (in fact, the novel's last line hints at the sorrows that await Verena in her imprudent marriage)—does seem like an affirmation of ordinary human feeling, particularly since Verena's friend and sponsor, Olive Chancellor, has developed a neurotically controlling, morbidly possessive feeling for Verena that cannot seem other than unhealthy.

But of course this point of view is no longer acceptable. For critics of James, the question of Olive's latent lesbianism has become a focal point, and the whole idea that marriage might be a more natural or more attractive prospect for Verena than a lesbian relationship is seen as nothing more than prejudice—never mind that Verena herself, having no evident lesbian inclinations, would have to distort her own nature in order to choose Olive over Basil. Meanwhile, other critics, who wish to claim James for the side of the angels, insist that his intention in *The Bostonians* is "subversive," and accuse Basil (whom James makes vividly appealing despite his various faults) of being "narcissistic" and "manipulative," and of evincing "male brutality" and "sadism"; his running off with Verena at the end of the novel is denounced as "a virtual rape" and "a murder of some sort."

As Shaw points out, the reactions of certain of these latter-day critics to the characters they discuss are so rabid that they almost seem to have forgotten they are dealing with fictional *personae*. Theirs is approximately the mentality of 19th-century audiences in small mining towns out West who, when a stage villain was about to double-cross the hero or abduct the heroine, would stand up and threaten to shoot him. But presumably those miners did not hold doctorates in American literature.

Shaw asserts, rightly, that "the academics in question have neither experience nor standing when it comes to the aesthetic evaluation of literature." Perhaps even more depressing, however, is their lack of ordinary wisdom, of any compassion for humanity. Human be-

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ings are imperfect, social structures are imperfect: this is something Melville knew, and James, and Hawthorne, and Twain. It is something every adult learns in the sorrowful process of growing up. Only the professors cited in *Recovering American Literature* seem determined, in their shrill righteousness, not to know it.

Science in the Crosshairs

HIGHER SUPERSTITION: THE ACADEMIC LEFT AND ITS QUARRELS WITH SCIENCE. BY PAUL R. GROSS AND NORMAN LEVITT. *Johns Hopkins University Press. 328 pp. $25.95.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY SALMON

SCIENCE has brought us penicillin, the polio vaccine, the green revolution in agriculture, men on the moon, and Tang. But according to an assortment of radical feminists, Afrocentrists, deconstructionists, deep ecologists, and cultural constructivists, it has also brought us white, male, Eurocentric oppression and a despoiled earth. These people, some of whom even call themselves scientists (though most are drawn from the social sciences and the humanities), say we need a new, postmodern science, taking its bearings from the oppressed and from those cultures living closest to mother earth.

It would be easy to dismiss this foolishness, if it did not claim such a large following in universities. The interesting question is, why does it? In *Higher Superstition*, Paul R. Gross (a biologist) and Norman Levitt (a mathematician) offer some answers. For one thing, they write, science, along with the idea of natural rights, is the core of the Western project. Its methods and discoveries are one of the grandest accomplishments of the Enlightenment. "Thus science becomes," according to Gross and Levitt, "an irresistible target for those Western intellectuals whose sense of their own heritage has become an intolerable moral burden."

There is also another reason why, in the authors' opinion, radicals in college humanities and social-science departments have turned their attention to science: fact envy. Ever since social scientists embraced the distinction between facts and values, which entailed ceding the realm of fact to natural science, their discipline began to lose prestige. Now, "the more theoretical the social sciences are, the less respect they get." As for the humanities, they are seen as "subjective beyond hope of redemption." This has led humanists and social scientists to seek redress either by demonstrating the superiority of their new analytical tools (deconstruction *et al.*) or by undercutting the natural sciences' claim to truth, or both.

Still, it is only recently that the academic Left has put science in the crosshairs. Why the delay? Science is hard going; in order to prove that it has been deformed by white, male, capitalist greed, one first has to learn some of it. At least in principle, one needs to understand Newton's *Principia Mathematica* before one sets out, as the feminist Sandra Harding does, to demonstrate that it is a "rape manual."

What is more, the fact that scientific theories are susceptible of empirical proof makes it difficult to dispute them with the deconstructionist's bag of tricks—more difficult, say, than disputing theories of Shakespeare's intentions. It is just not convincing to argue that modern biology is a fraud because it is dominated by male metaphors when the findings of biology do such a miraculous job of healing the sick.

True, even ignorance sometimes poses no obstacle to the academic Left. As Gross and Levitt write, "the *moral authority* with which the academic Left emphatically credits itself" often seems, in itself, "sufficient to guarantee the validity of the critique." Thus, Andrew Ross,

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professor of English at Princeton, dedicates his *Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits*, a work aimed at the overthrow of Western science, to "all of the science teachers I never had. It could only have been written without them." This is apparently literally true since, Gross and Levitt tell us, Ross knows "virtually nothing" about science.

Even when it is not proudly traveling under the banner of ignorance, however, the attack on science often consists of nonsense. One well-known critic, Steven Best, writes seriously about a "postmodern" physics, influenced by thermodynamics, quantum mechanics, and chaos theory. Yet, Gross and Levitt show, Best's understanding of these concepts is ridiculously flawed. Similarly, Evelyn Fox Keller, a feminist critic and scientist, claims to have discovered a major sexist failing in modern biology: the idea of DNA as the "master molecule" that dominates and orders the organism. But "master molecule," as Gross and Leavitt point out, is not a literal concept, it is "shorthand for 'initial information source,' " and implies nothing whatsoever about control. And so forth.

How much damage has the "higher superstition" done? Although Gross and Levitt believe science can withstand inept attacks, they are alarmed by the extent to which "these intellectual misadventures are so well received in nonscientific academic circles." Ultimately, they believe, this could lead to a further breach between the natural and social sciences, and could turn promising students away from serious careers in science.

Meanwhile, outside the university, the attack on science has also had a growing impact, especially on the environmental movement. The modern era, goes the indictment, has been characterized by a relentless assault on the earth's ecosystems, and the fault lies at the feet of the usual suspects: industrialization, capitalism, white-male-European dominance. Clearly science has played a major role in our ecological crisis, for it has handed us the implements used to kill the earth.

For the authors, all this is epitomized in the work of the environmental scientist Jeremy Rifkin, whom they consider an utterly dishonest scaremonger. To cite one example, Rifkin blames the so-called "agricultural crisis of the 1980's" on every conceivable man-made ecological intrusion, including acid rain, the buildup of greenhouse gases, air pollution, the loss of bio-diversity, and ozone depletion. Yet there *was* no agricultural crisis in the 1980's, and even if there had been, none of the named factors could have played a role in it.

As Gross and Levitt see it, Rifkin and others mentioned in this book are given a respectful hearing in part because the scientific community has adopted a relaxed attitude toward the misuse of science in the service of public policies which the community happens to support. Thus, although Rifkin has been eviscerated by the biologist Stephen J. Gould, scientists in general have "tended to be vaguely receptive to the political right-thinking to which the critics lay claim," with the consequence that they fail to notice what is really under attack—namely, the "underlying conceptual basis" of science itself. This is no doubt one reason why Afrocentrist science has received so little criticism—along with the fear that exposing its "New Age boobery" (as the authors call it) can open one to charges of racism.

At the beginning of *Higher Superstition*, the authors strike an almost ambivalent note, as if unsure how much alarm is really called for in the face of the postmodern critique of science. By book's end, however, they have come to a hard-nosed defense of rationality and of a rigorous scientific education. Almost alone among their colleagues, they recognize that deconstruction, environmentalism, feminism, Afrocentrism, and other such movements represent nothing less than the potential triumph of another and even more sinister "ism," namely, nihilism.

Unlike those they criticize, Gross and Levitt thank their science teachers. We should thank them for this book and for having had the courage to write it.

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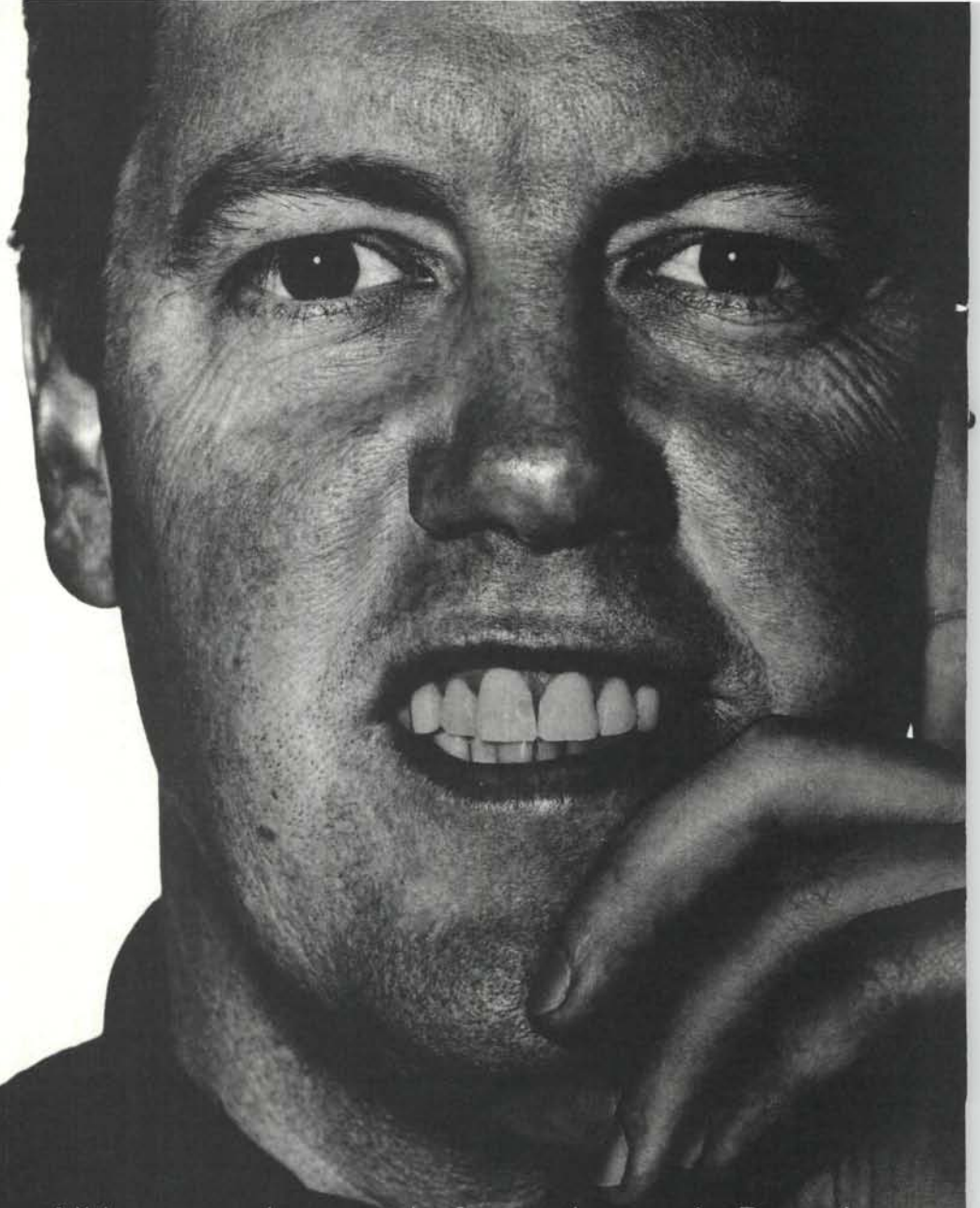

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